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#7

CEMETERY DANCE PRESENTS

\$3.95

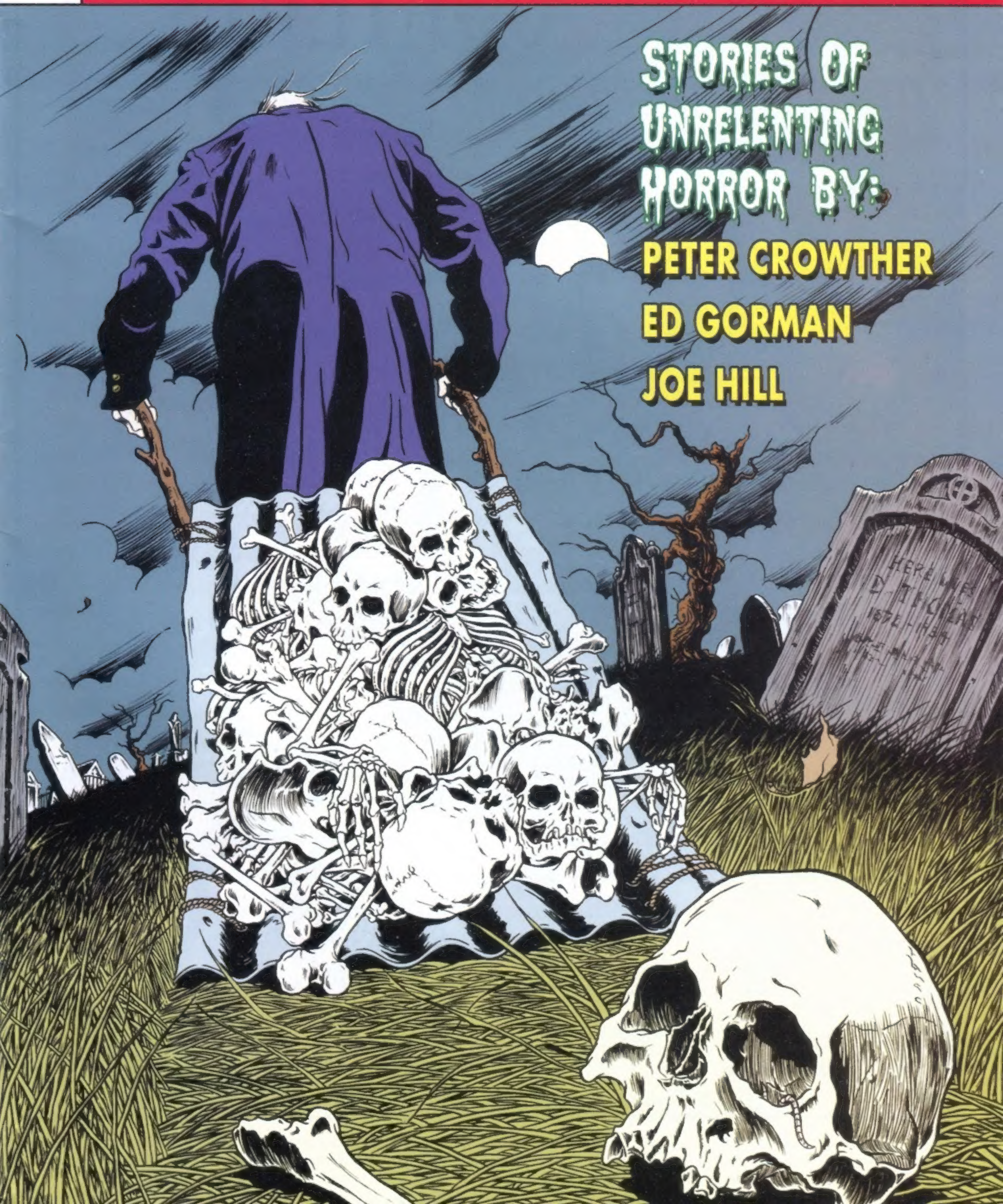
GRAVE TALES

STORIES OF
UNRELENTING
HORROR BY:

PETER CROWTHER

ED GORMAN

JOE HILL



RICHARD CHIZMAR
Publisher/Editor

BRIAN JAMES FREEMAN
Editor

Cover Artwork by
CHRIS ODGERS

CEMETERY DANCE PRESENTS GRAVE TALES #7

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WORDS FROM THE EDITORS

Richard Chizmar & Brian James Freeman

RUSTLE

Story by Peter Crowther

Adaptation by Joe Hill

Art by Jake Allen

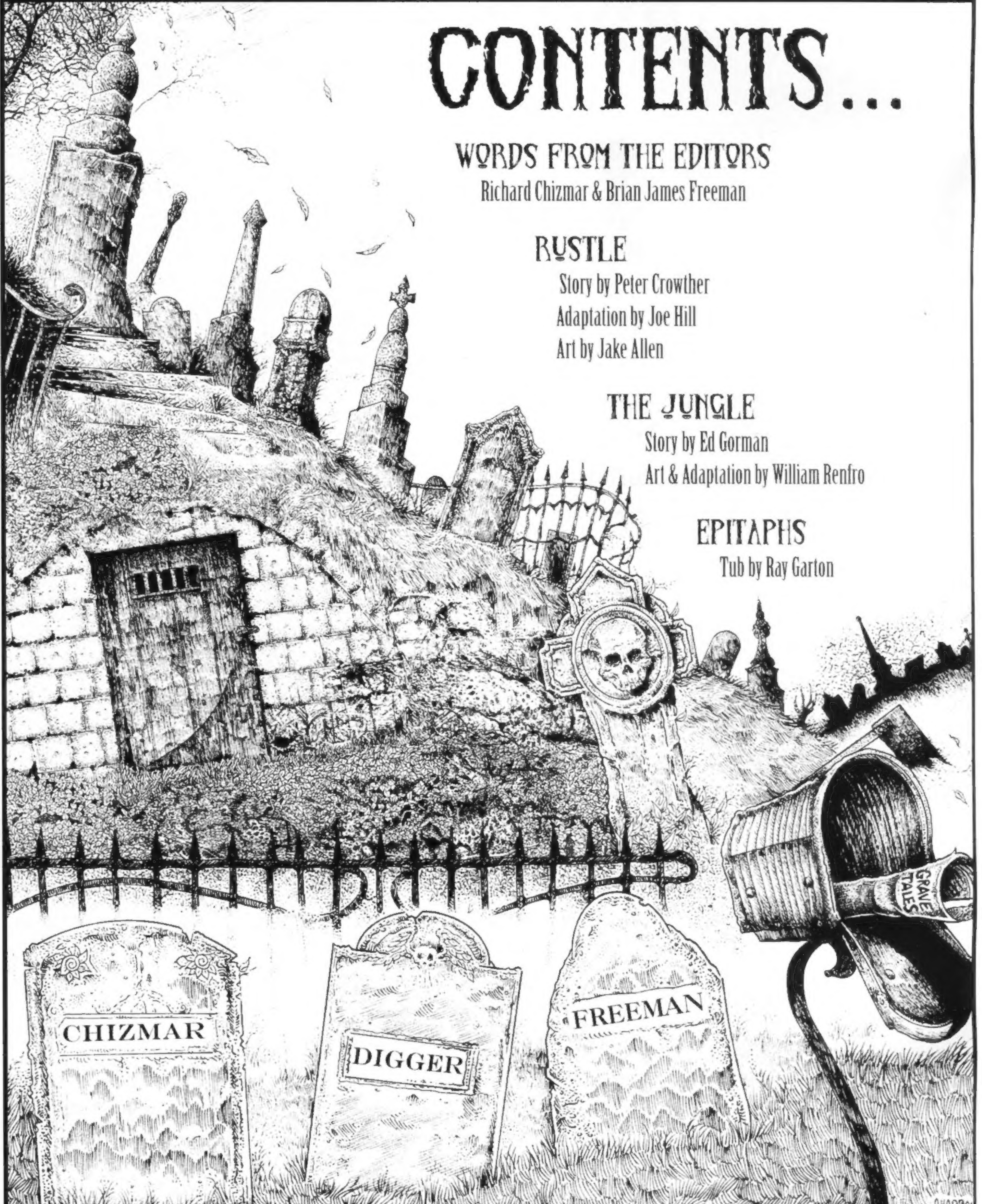
THE JUNGLE

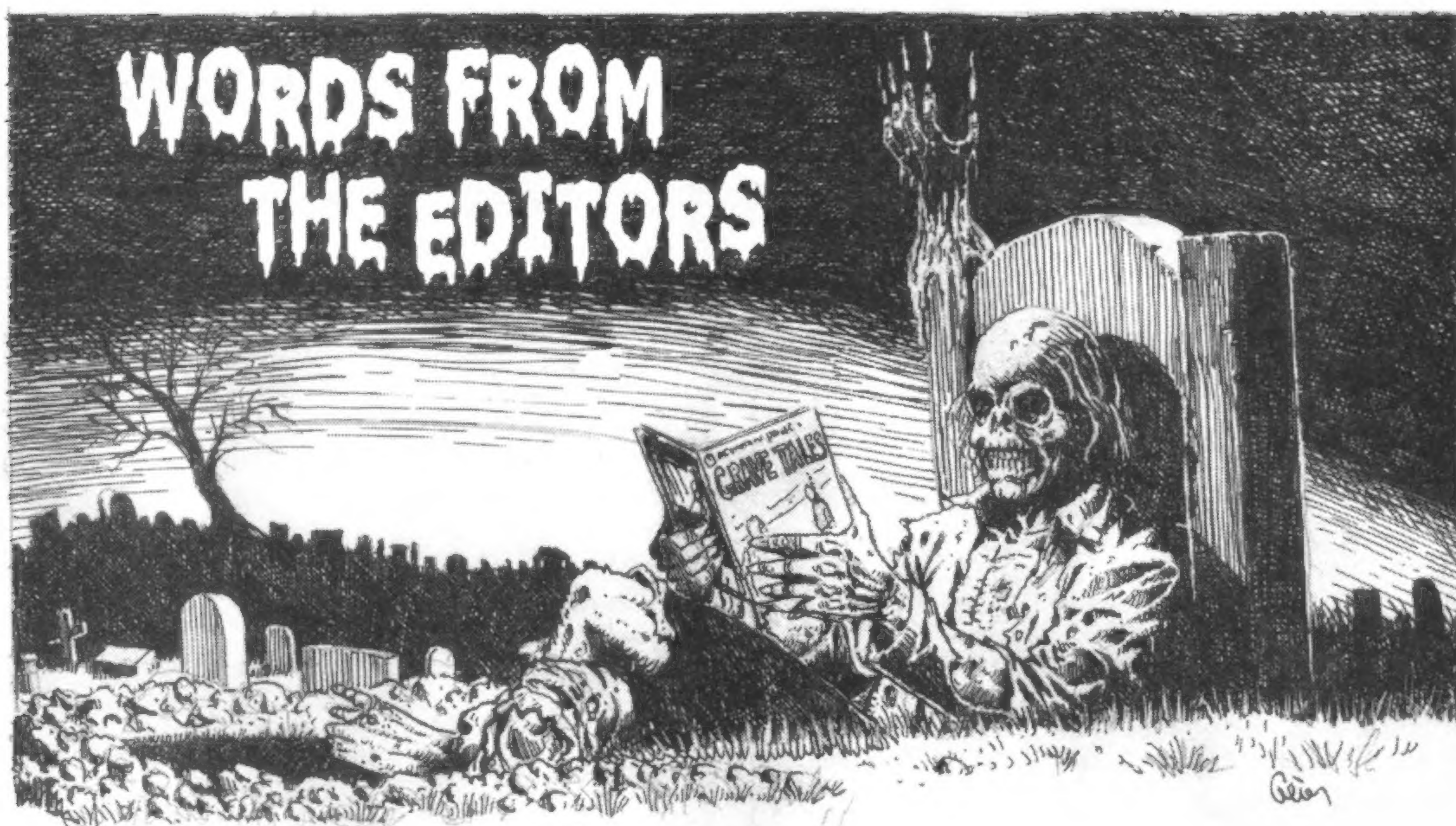
Story by Ed Gorman

Art & Adaptation by William Rensfro

EPITAPHS

Tub by Ray Garton





Welcome to another issue of *Grave Tales*. Issue #7 has been a long time coming—much too long and for that I apologize—but I’m thrilled to report that we have big plans in the future for *Grave Tales*. Look for a surprise announcement soon which will allow us to once again publish on a regular schedule and continue to showcase the very best in horror comics.



As for the issue you are holding in your hands...you will find amazing stories by Peter Crowther (“Rustle”) and Ed Gorman (“The Jungle”), with Joe Hill and William Renfro handling the adaptations. Jake Allen

and William Renfro contribute terrific interior art, and Ray Garton’s creepy short story (“Tub”) closes out issue #7. Toss in a gorgeous cover by Chris Odgers, and this issue ranks as one of our very best.



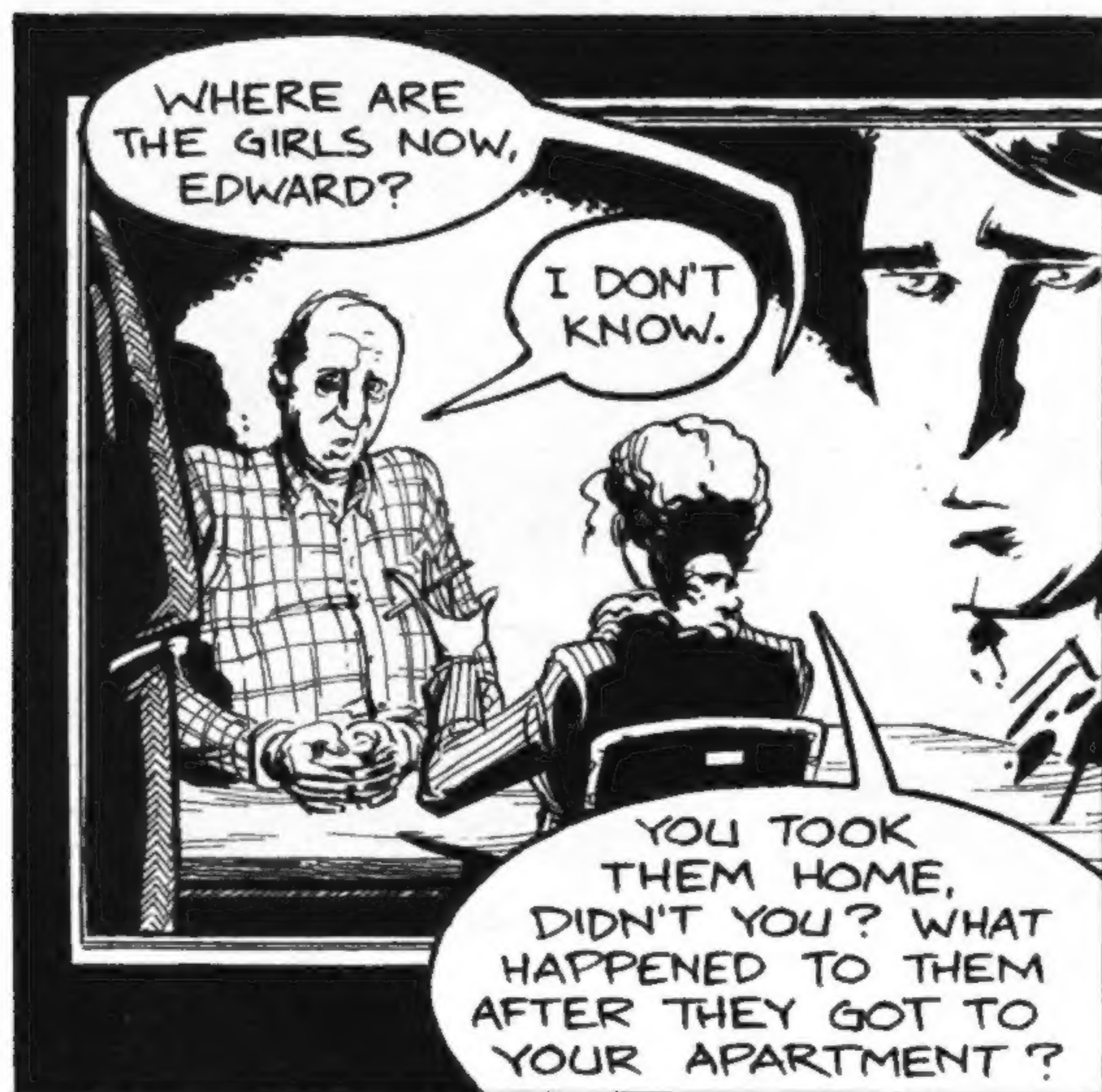
As always, we’d love to hear your thoughts on *Grave Tales*—what you liked, what you didn’t, what you would like to see more of. Please feel free to email your comments to info@cemeterydance.com, or mail them to P.O. Box 623, Forest Hill, MD 21050.

—Richard Chizmar

Rustle

Script by Joe Hill

Art by Jake Allen



based on the story by Peter Crowther



AND YOU OPEN IT AND SEND THEM IN? DO THEY STRUGGLE? DO YOU HAVE TO MAKE THEM?

NO, THEY JUST STEP INSIDE.

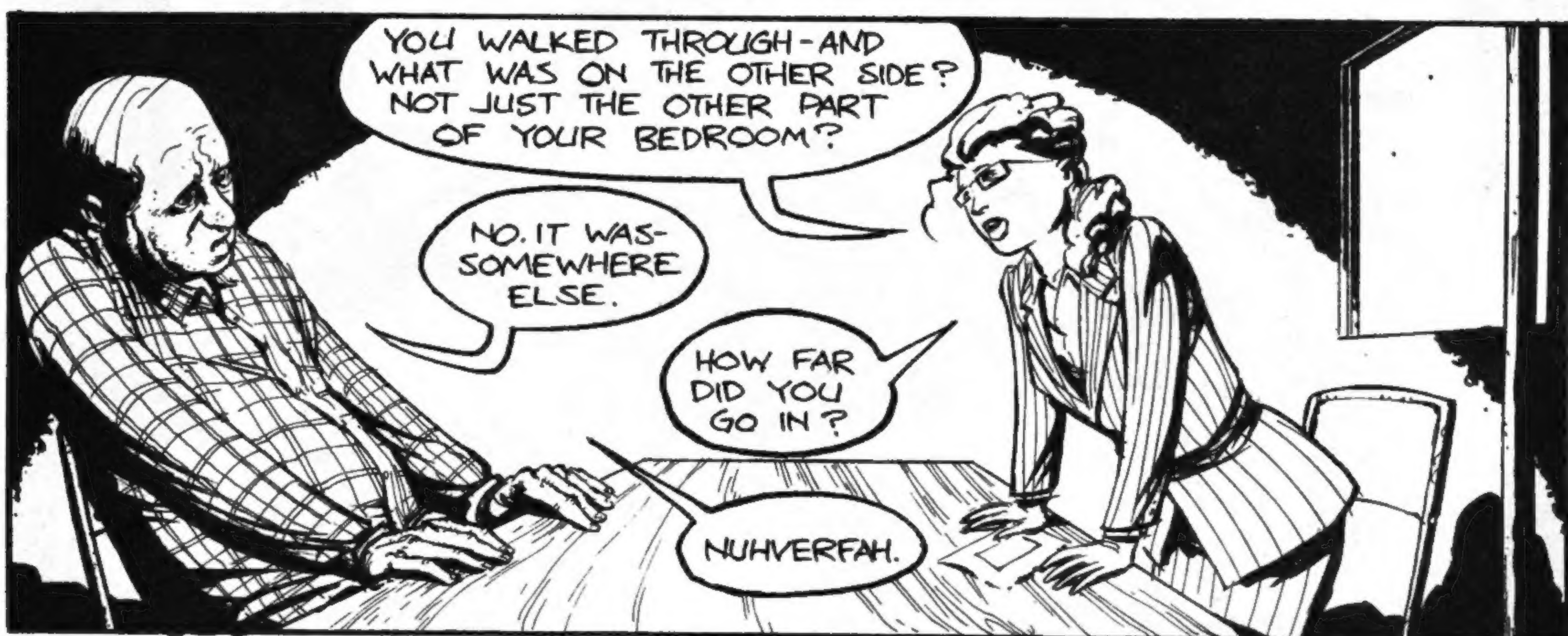
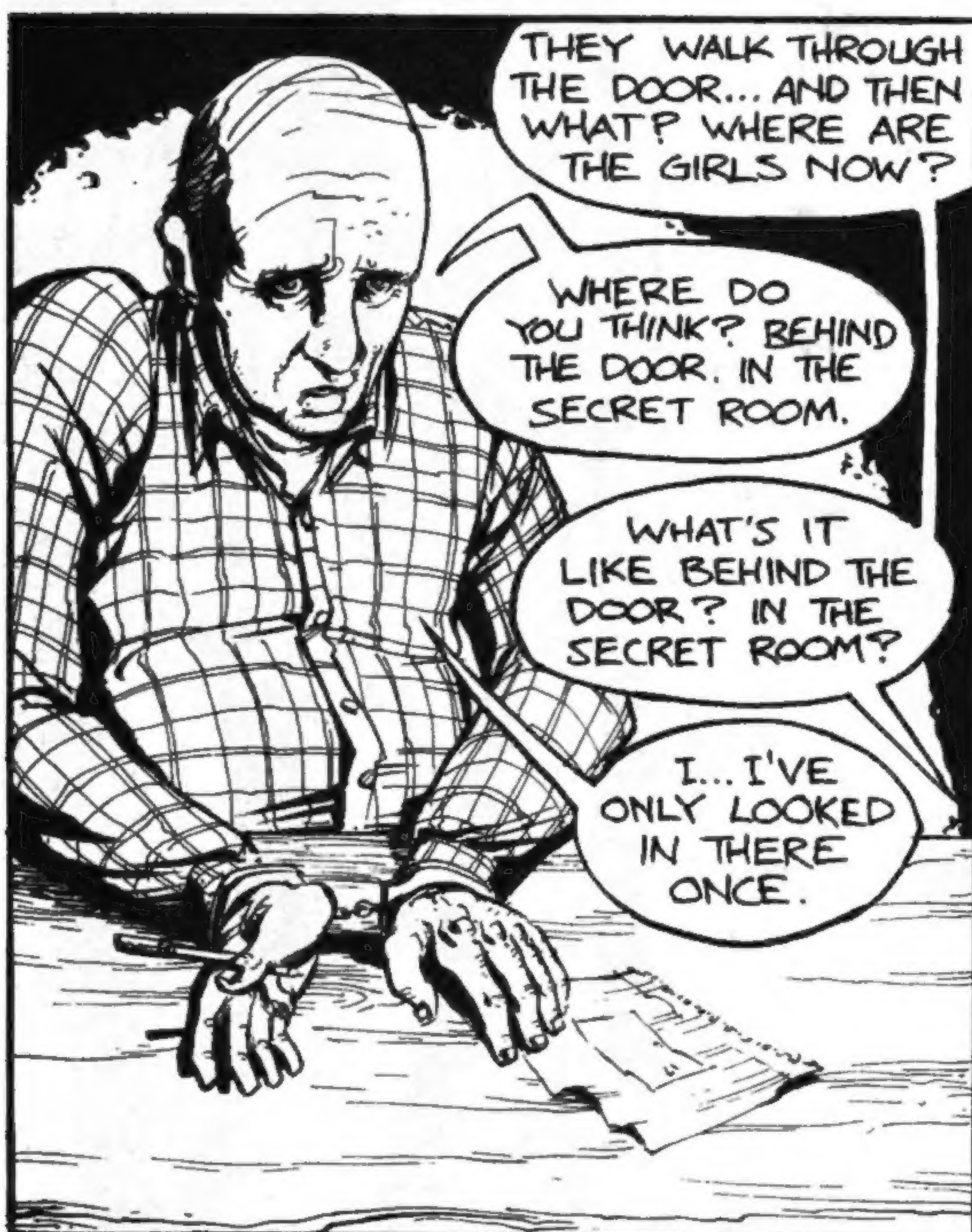
I SEE.

BLAM

SCRIPT
Joe
HILL

ART
Jake
allen

based on
the story by
Peter
Crowther





WHAT WAS IT
LIKE IN THERE?

DARK. IT
WAS DARK.



AND THERE'S THINGS.
SHAPES RUSTLING
AROUND.

WHAT
SHAPES?

I...I...
UNNNH...



CAN YOU DESCRIBE
THEM TO ME?

JUST LIKE HEAPS.
LIKE-LIKE-LIKE-

TAKE YOUR
TIME.

LIKE PILES
OF LAUNDRY.

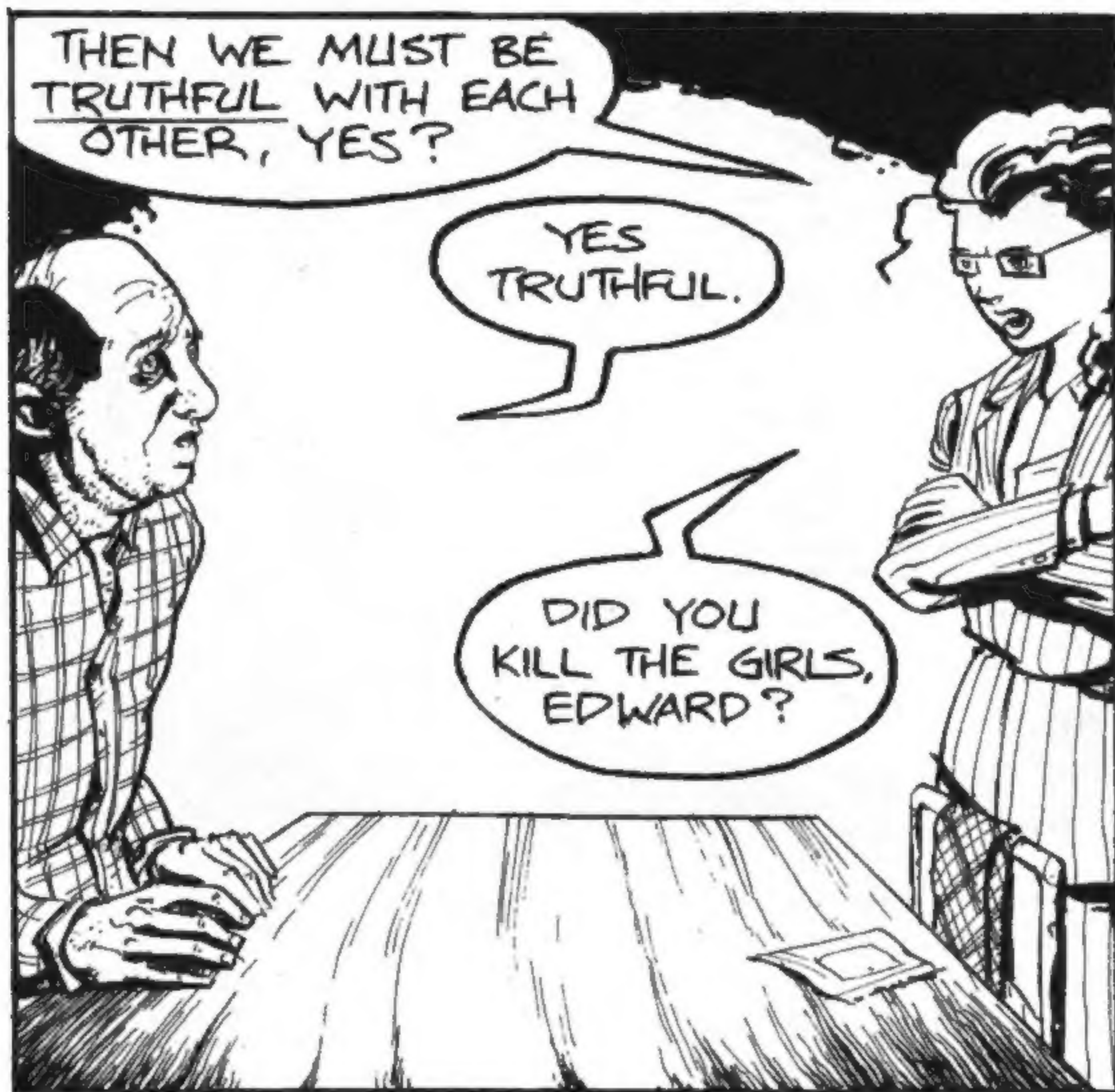


LAUNDRY?

LIKE THAT!

LIKE
WHAT?





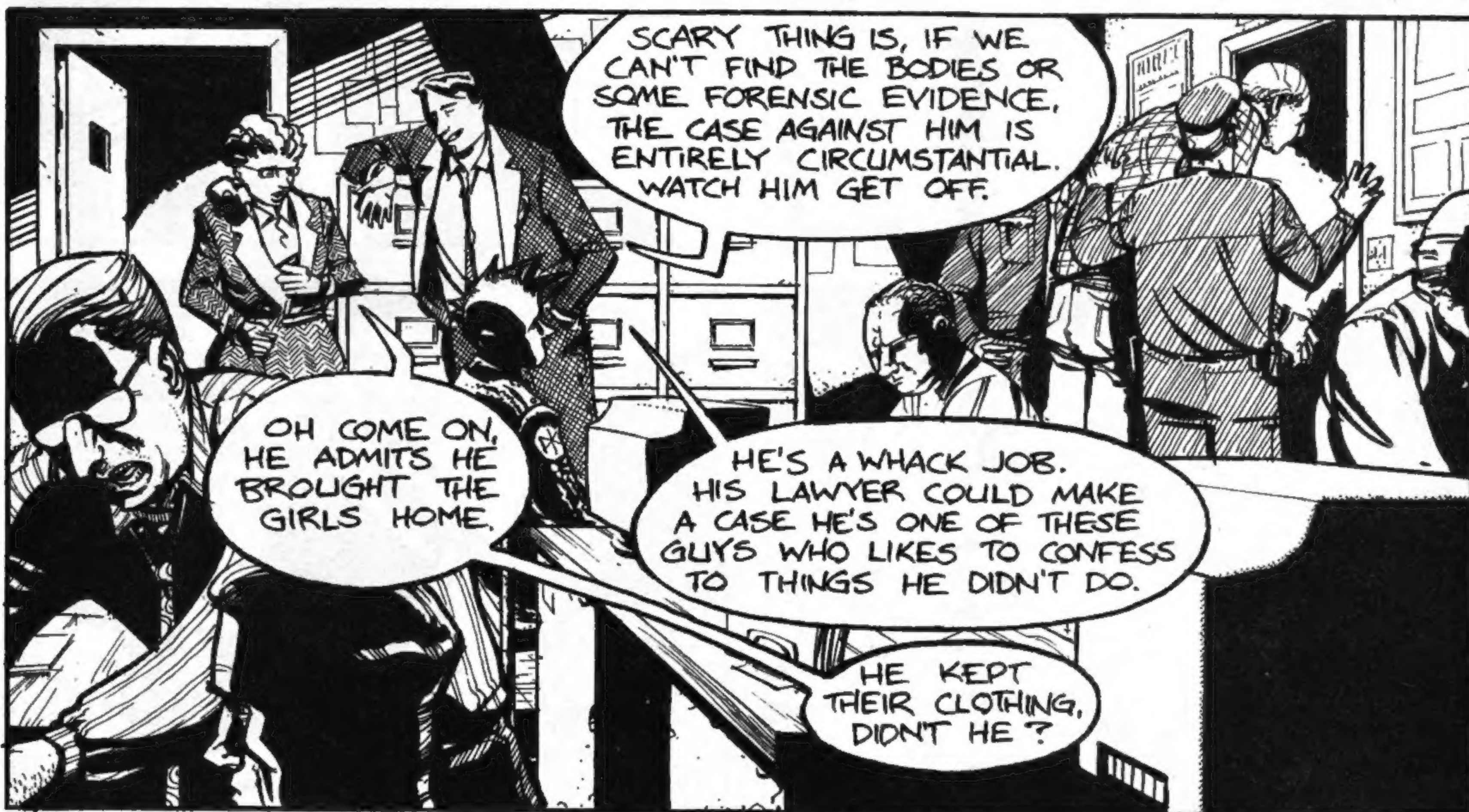


I'M ALWAYS ASLEEP.

AND WHEN I WAKE THEIR CLOTHES ARE JUST LYING AROUND.

I'M ALWAYS SO TIRED AFTER...AFTER I SEND ONE OF THE GIRLS THROUGH THE DOOR. I NEED TO LIE DOWN.

I KNOW IT SOUNDS LIKE A LIE BUT IT'S ALL TRUE.



SCARY THING IS, IF WE CAN'T FIND THE BODIES OR SOME FORENSIC EVIDENCE, THE CASE AGAINST HIM IS ENTIRELY CIRCUMSTANTIAL. WATCH HIM GET OFF.

OH COME ON, HE ADMITS HE BROUGHT THE GIRLS HOME.

HE'S A WHACK JOB. HIS LAWYER COULD MAKE A CASE HE'S ONE OF THESE GUYS WHO LIKES TO CONFESS TO THINGS HE DIDN'T DO.

HE KEPT THEIR CLOTHING, DIDN'T HE?



HE THINKS HE DID.

HE DIDN'T?

WE'VE GOT A CARDBOARD BOX FULL OF PANTIES AND FISHNETS WE PULLED OUT OF HIS CLOSET. GIVING THE FORENSICS GUYS FITS, THOUGH.



ONE OF THEM SWEARS THIS STUFF HAS NEVER BEEN WORN. NO RIPS. NO SIGNS OF WEAR. NO STAINS. I MEAN...CLEAN. PLUS THERE ARE NO TAGS IN THEM. HE CUT THEM OUT.

AREN'T THERE THINGS THAT MATCH WHAT THE VICTIMS WERE LAST SEEN IN?

WE'RE WORKING THAT ANGLE.



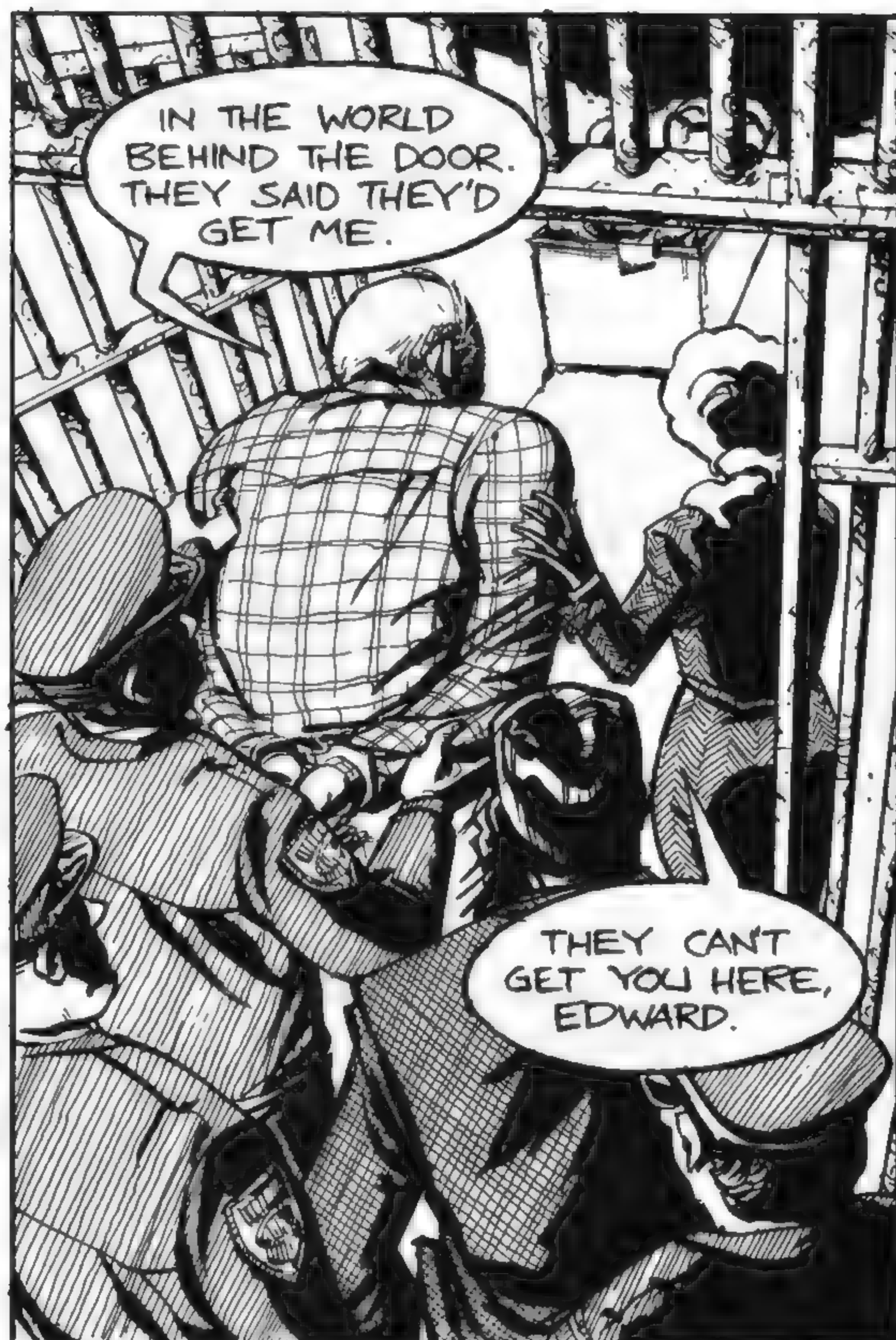
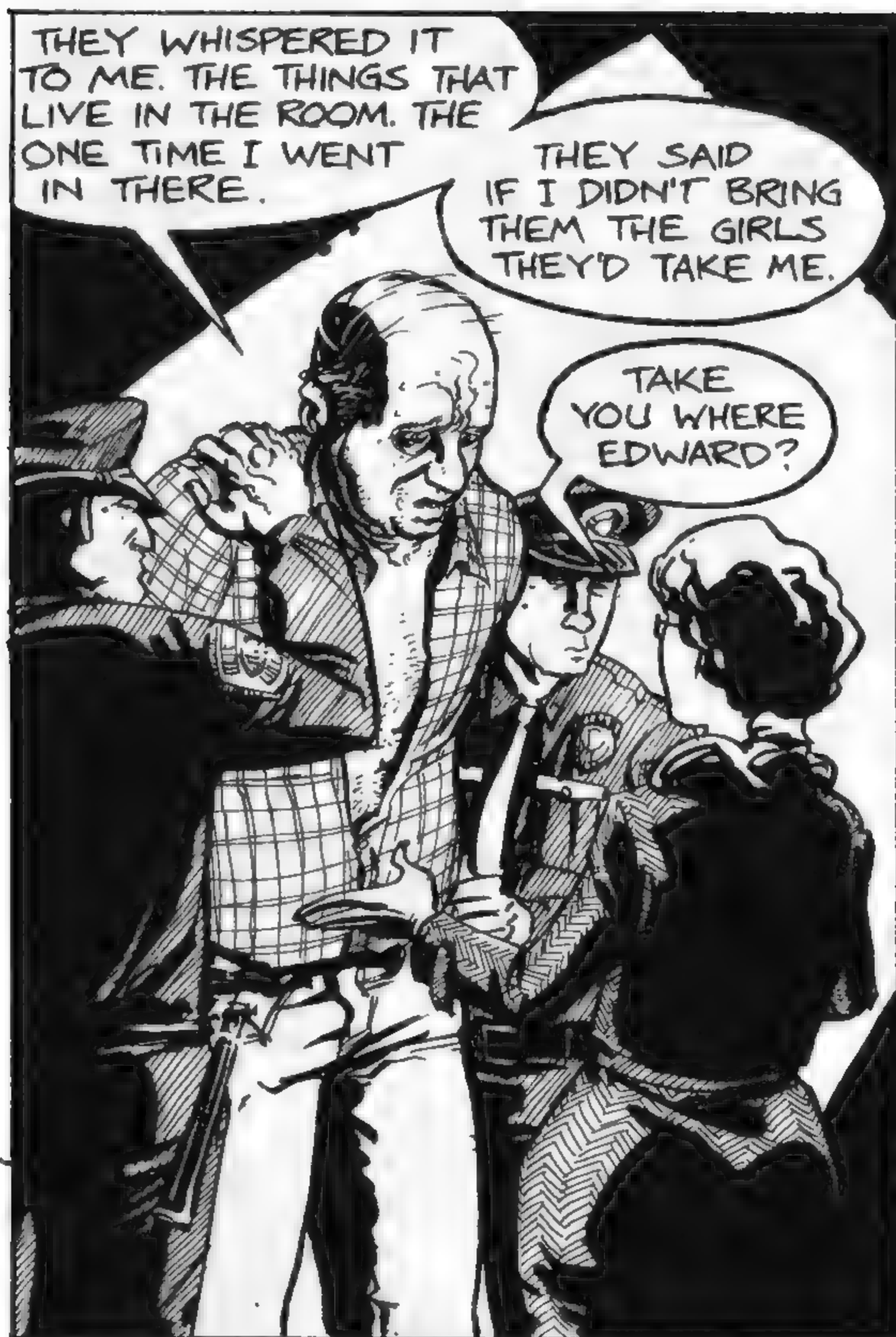
HOW'S THAT GOING?

SO GOOD WE CALLED IN THIS VERY CUTE, VERY PRICEY SHRINK TO SEE IF SHE COULDN'T TALK HIM INTO REVEALING SOME MORE EVIDENCE.

NICE SCARF. SHOULDN'T JUST LEAVE IT LYING ON THE FLOOR.

I DIDN'T LEAVE IT - THANK YOU. CAN I INTEREST YOU IN A BREATH MINT?









THE JUNGLE

WRITTEN BY
ED GORMAN

ART & ADAPTATION BY
WILLIAM RENFRO

IN THE DARKNESS AND THE COLD, SILVER RAIN, I LOOKED OUT THE DOOR OF THE BOXCAR I'D BEEN RIDING IN SINCE THE WYOMING BORDER, AND LOOKED DOWN THE RAILS AT THE HOBO JUNGLE THAT WAS MAYBE A QUARTER OF A MILE AHEAD.

YOU CAN ALWAYS SPOT A JUNGLE JUST BY LOOKING FOR THE FIRES.

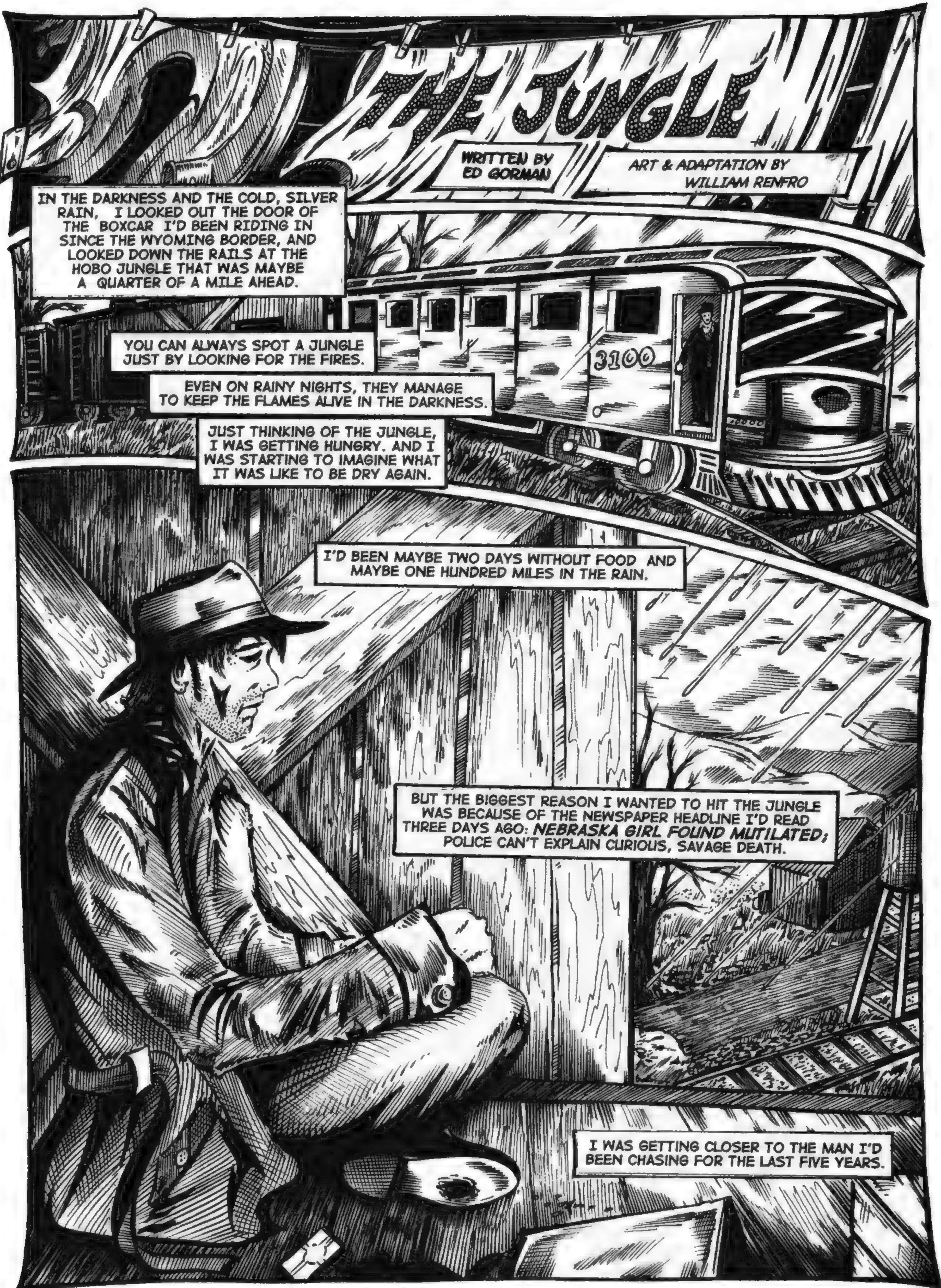
EVEN ON RAINY NIGHTS, THEY MANAGE TO KEEP THE FLAMES ALIVE IN THE DARKNESS.

JUST THINKING OF THE JUNGLE, I WAS GETTING HUNGRY. AND I WAS STARTING TO IMAGINE WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE DRY AGAIN.

I'D BEEN MAYBE TWO DAYS WITHOUT FOOD AND MAYBE ONE HUNDRED MILES IN THE RAIN.


BUT THE BIGGEST REASON I WANTED TO HIT THE JUNGLE WAS BECAUSE OF THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINE I'D READ THREE DAYS AGO: **NEBRASKA GIRL FOUND MUTILATED; POLICE CAN'T EXPLAIN CURIOUS, SAVAGE DEATH.**

I WAS GETTING CLOSER TO THE MAN I'D BEEN CHASING FOR THE LAST FIVE YEARS.







I'D BEEN LOOKING FOR HIM ALL THIS TIME
AND NOW I KNEW I WAS GETTING CLOSER.
HE WAS RUNNING OUT OF JUNGLES TO HIDE IN.
MAYBE TONIGHT I WAS GOING TO GET LUCKY.




I CLIMBED ONTO THE SIDE OF THE GONDOLA
AND GRABBED THE LADDER SO I COULD
JUMP. SOME OF THE OLDER 'BOS LIKE TO
TALK BIG ABOUT THROWING YOURSELF OFF
A FREIGHT CAR GOING TWENTY MILES PER
HOUR, BUT IT'S ALL JUST TALK BECAUSE
NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU DO IT, THE
SHOCK TO YOUR LEGS AND BACK STILL
HURTS. NOT TO MENTION GETTING CUT
IN HALF IF YOU FALL BETWEEN THE WHEELS.



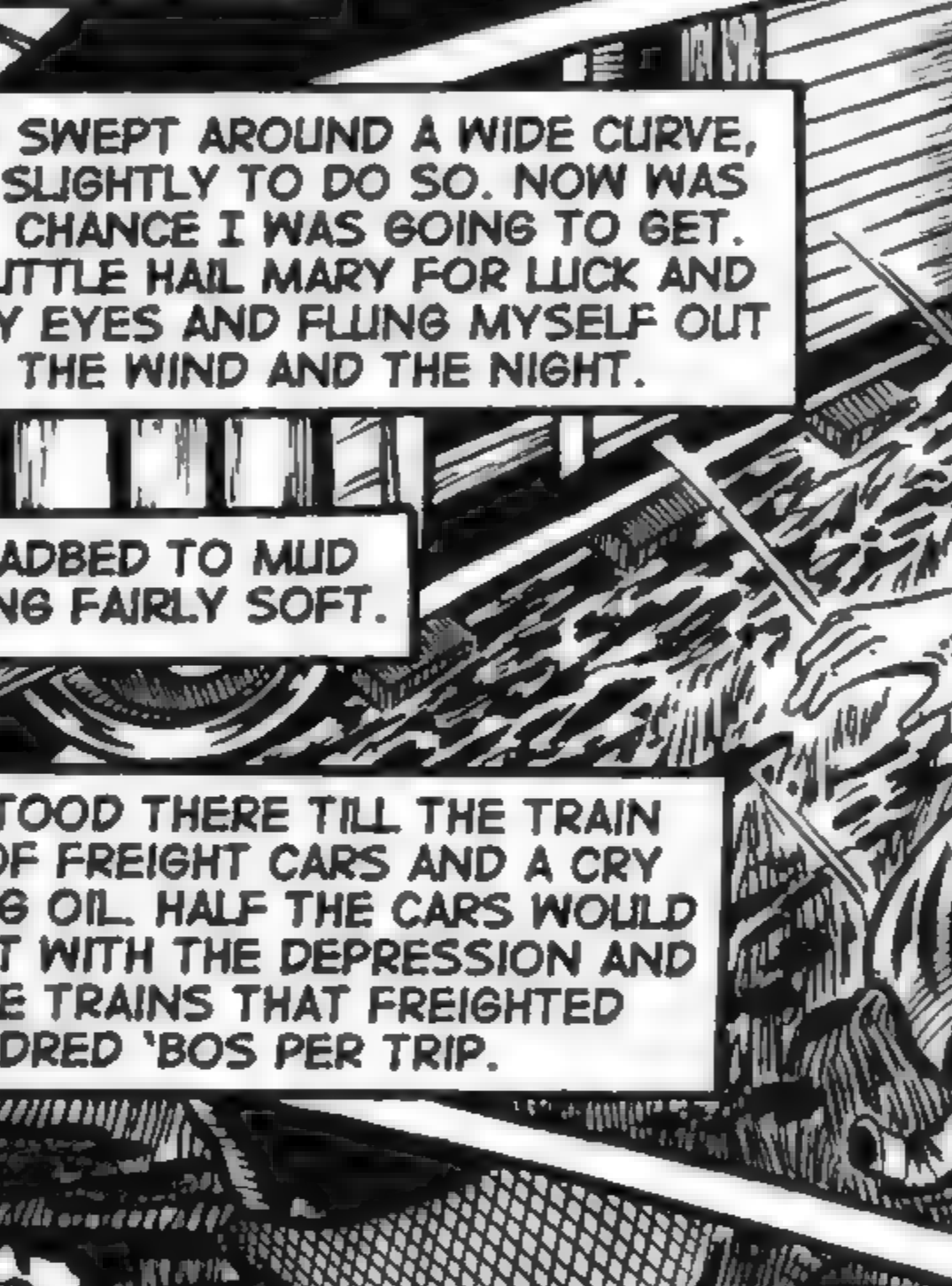
THE TRAIN SWEEPED AROUND A WIDE CURVE,
SLOWING SLIGHTLY TO DO SO. NOW WAS
THE BEST CHANCE I WAS GOING TO GET.
I SAID A LITTLE HAIL MARY FOR LUCK AND
CLOSED MY EYES AND FLUNG MYSELF OUT
INTO THE WIND AND THE NIGHT.



THE RAIN HAD TURNED THE ROADBED TO MUD
AND THAT HAD MADE MY LANDING FAIRLY SOFT.



I KEPT MY FEET AND STOOD THERE TILL THE TRAIN
ROCKED PAST, A BLUR OF FREIGHT CARS AND A CRY
OF IRON WHEELS NEEDING OIL. HALF THE CARS WOULD
HAVE MEN IN THEM. WHAT WITH THE DEPRESSION AND
ALL, YOU FOUND SOME TRAINS THAT FREIGHTED
MAYBE TWO HUNDRED 'BOS PER TRIP.



THEN IT WAS JUST ME AND THE NIGHT AND THE RAIN,
THE LIGHT OF THE CABOOSE RECEDING IN THE GLOOM,
THE WAIL OF THE TRAIN FAINTER AND FAINTER.

IT WAS SPRING, AND EVERYTHING WAS TURNING, SO THE NIGHT SMELLED CLEAN AND FRESH OF PINE, AND DOWN THE GULLY AND ACROSS THE CREEK IN THE JUNGLE, THE AROMA OF HOT 'BO STEW.

I WAS TEN YARDS FROM THE BONFIRE WHEN THE GUY STEPPED OUT OF THE SHADOWS.

HE WAS NO-ARGUMENT BIG AND NO-ARGUMENT MEAN.

I'M ROLLINS, WHO'RE YOU?

THOUGHT JUNGLES WELCOMED 'BOS?

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE NO CHANCES.

WE GOT LAW PROBLEMS HERE FRIEND, AND WE FIGGER THE COPPERS ARE PROBL'Y GONNA PLANT ONE OF THEIR OWN UNDERCOVER.

HE WAS SOME PIECE OF WORK, ALL RIGHT; THE FRIENDLY EXECUTIONER.

COME ON IN AND MEET THE BOYS.

MOST JUNGLES HAVE THEIR ENFORCERS AND OBVIOUSLY ROLLINS HERE WAS DOING THE HONORS IN THIS ONE.

THERE WERE MAYBE FIFTY MEN
LIVING IN THIS JUNGLE, MEN OF
EVERY AGE AND EVERY TYPE.

WHAT THEY HAD IN COMMON WERE THE
RAGS ON THEIR BACKS AND THE LOOK
OF DESPERATION IN THEIR EYES.

AT ONE OF THE SMALLER FIRES I
FOUND THE 'BO STEW SIMMERING
IN A BIG OLD FIVE GALLON DRUM.

THE STEW SMELLED MOSTLY OF VEGETABLES
AND THAT WAS JUST FINE BY ME.

GRAB YOURSELF
A PLATE AND DIG IN.

I LOADED UP MY TIN AND WENT OVER
NEXT TO A TREE AND ATE MY DINNER.

WHEN YOU
ARE DONE WITH
YOUR PIE TIN JUST
TAKE IT DOWN TO THE
CREEK AND WASH IT
FOR THE NEXT GUY
TO USE.

I STARTED WATCHING EVERY-
BODY AROUND THE CAMP.

AS I SAT THERE WITH MY BACK
AGAINST THE TREE, I FELL ASLEEP.
I DIDN'T PLAN TO SLEEP AT ALL,
BUT SUDDENLY MY EYES STARTED
CLOSING AND I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF.

WHEN I WOKE UP, IT WAS REAL COLD. MY BONES ACHED FROM YEARS OF SLEEPING ON DAMP, HARD GROUND. BUT I TOLD MYSELF IT WAS SOON ALL GOING TO BE WORTH IT. I HAD A REAL SENSE THAT I'D FOUND THE CAMP WHERE MY MAN WAS STAYING.

I WAS HALFWAY BACK TO THE JUNGLE WHEN I HEARD THE CRY OF THE WOLF.

I STOPPED AND STOOD SO STILL ALL I COULD HEAR WAS MY HEARTBEAT.

I WENT DOWN TO THE FAST-RUNNING CREEK. THEY'D DUG LATRINES THERE AND I PUT ONE TO GOOD USE. THE STEAM OFF THE URINE ROSE LIKE GHOSTS TO THE FULL MOON RIDING HIGH IN THE DARK, NIGHT SKY.



THE WOLF CRIED AGAIN.

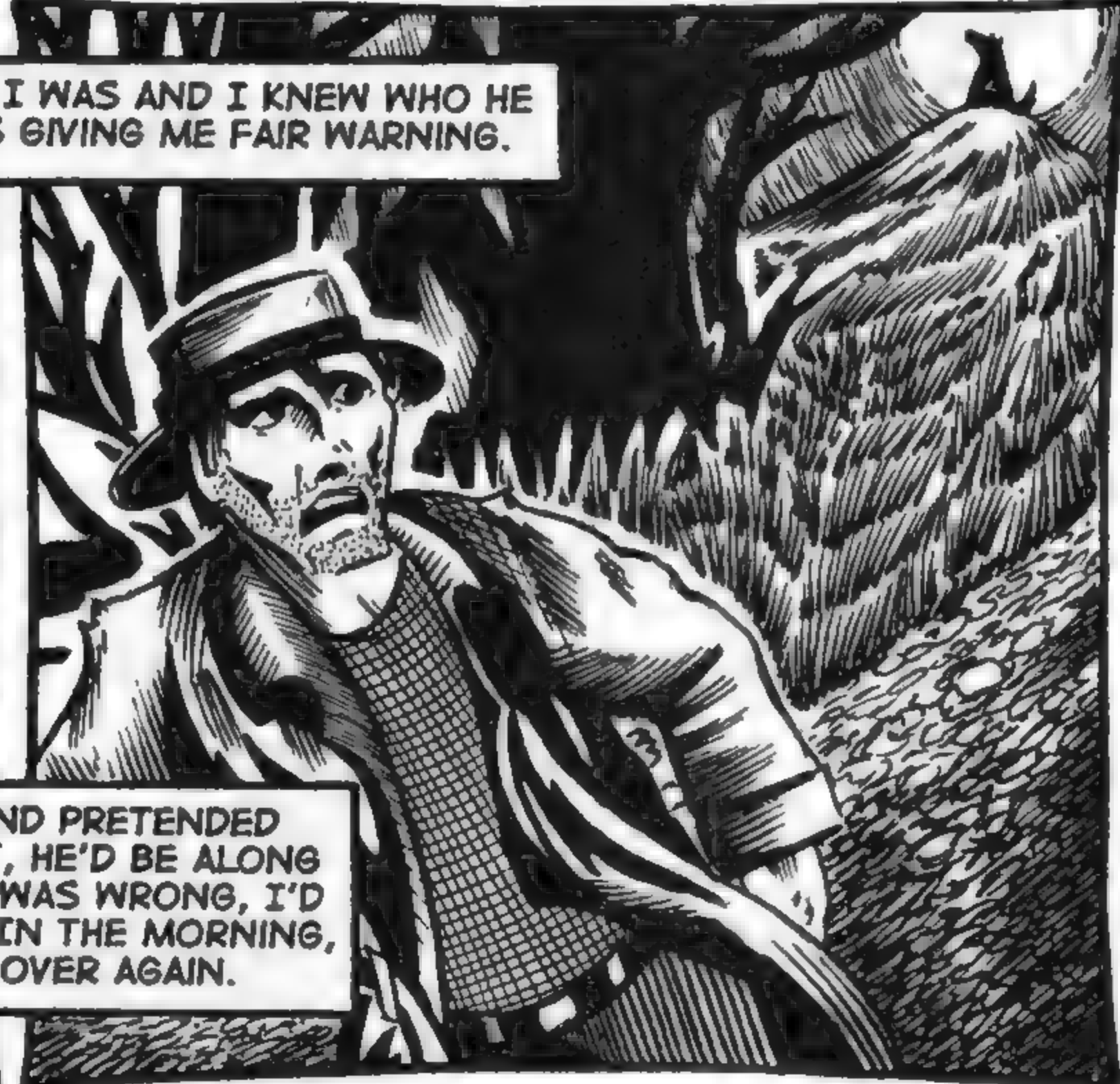
THEN I SAW HIM THERE ON THE HILL.

HE TURNED AND LOOKED DOWN THE HILL AT ME. A LOW RUMBLING SOUND SEEMED TO WORK ITS WAY THROUGH HIS ENTIRE BODY AND THEN CAME OUT OF HIS MOUTH AS A GROWL.



HE KNEW WHO I WAS AND I KNEW WHO HE WAS. HE WAS GIVING ME FAIR WARNING.

I WENT BACK TO MY TREE AND PRETENDED TO BE ASLEEP. IF I WAS RIGHT, HE'D BE ALONG IN THE NEXT FEW HOURS. IF I WAS WRONG, I'D BE ON THE FIRST FREIGHT OUT IN THE MORNING, STARTING MY SEARCH ALL OVER AGAIN.



SOMEBODY IN ONE OF THE LEAN-TOS WAS HAVING A PRETTY BAD NIGHTMARE. HE WAS CRYING FOR HIS MAMA. HE SOUNDED SAD IN A WAY THAT WAS ALMOST SCARY. IT WAS THE KIND OF SADNESS THAT CAN CRUSH THE HELL OUT OF A HUMAN BEING, AND MAKE DEATH SEEM WELCOME.

I WAS WONDERING WHAT WAS BOTHERING HIM WHEN I HEARD THE SOUND OF HEAVY SHOES TRAMPING THROUGH THE WET GRASS.

SOMEBODY WAS COMING INTO THE JUNGLE.

I COULDN'T BELIEVE THIS WAS THE MAN I'D BEEN SEARCHING FOR.

HE WAS AN OLD MAN WITH ONE OF THOSE SWEET AGED FACES YOU SOMETIMES SEE ON COUNTRY PRIESTS.

HE CAME OVER TO THE GUTTERING FIRE AND POURED HIMSELF A CUP OF COFFEE. HIS HANDS TREMBLED AS HE TIPPED THE CUP TO HIS MOUTH AND DRANK IT.

FINISHED, HE SUDDENLY LOOKED AROUND THE CAMP. HE MUST HAVE BEEN AWARE OF MY WATCHING HIM.

HE STOOD BY THE FIRE AND LOOKED AROUND SOME MORE. HE STILL WANTED TO KNOW WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING HIM.

IN HIS PANIC, HE LOOKED YOUNGER AND MORE CAPABLE THAN I'D FIRST THOUGHT.

THEN HE DECIDED IT WAS TIME TO LEAVE AND HE WALKED SIX LEAN-TOS DOWN TO AN EMPTY BERTH AND DISAPPEARED INSIDE. I TOOK NOTE OF WHICH ONE IT WAS.

WHEN I WAS PRETTY SURE HE WAS ALL SNUGGLED IN, I CLOSED MY EYES AND GOT A LITTLE SLEEP BEFORE ANOTHER DAY IN THE JUNGLE BEGAN.

A COUPLE OF TIMES THAT MORNING I CAUGHT THE OLD MAN STARING AT ME, BUT THEN LATER I SAW HIM STARING AT SOMEONE ELSE TOO. HE KNEW THERE WAS A SPY IN THE JUNGLE.

I JUST FINISHED WORK ON THE SECOND OF TWO LEAN-TOS AND THEN DECIDED TO MAKE MY MOVE.

YOU'RE DOIN' A FINE JOB BROTHER.

THANKS. JUST TRYING TO HELP OUT.

WE BEEN NEEDIN' A MAN WHO WAS GOOD WITH A HAMMER AND NAILS TO COME AROUND.

ON THE SURFACE WE WERE HAVING A NICE FRIENDLY CHAT BUT ROLLINS SEEMED TO SENSE SOMETHING FUNNY.

WELL, I'M GRATEFUL FOR THE GRUB AND HOSPITALITY AND I'M GLAD TO OBLIGE.

JUST WONDERIN' IF YOU WAS LOST OR SOMETHING.

LOST?

YEAH, BEIN' BACK HERE WITH THE LEAN-TOS AND ALL. MOST OF THE MEN STAY AWAY FROM OTHER MEN'S SLEEPIN' QUARTERS, YOU KNOW, IN CASE SOMETHIN' SHOULD TURN UP MISSIN'.

THEN THEY WOULDN'T GET BLAMED OR NOTHIN'.

OH, YEAH, RIGHT, I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN.

I JUST WANTED TO CHECK OUT THESE OTHER LEAN-TOS TO MAKE SURE I'M DOING MY OWN RIGHT.

YOUR DOIN' FINE. NO REASON TO COME BACK HERE.

THAT'S RIGHT. NO REASON AT ALL.

I NODDED GOODBYE TO HIM AND WENT BACK TO MY WORK.

THE SECOND TIME I TRIED TO GET TO THE OLD MAN'S LEAN-TO I HAD BETTER LUCK.

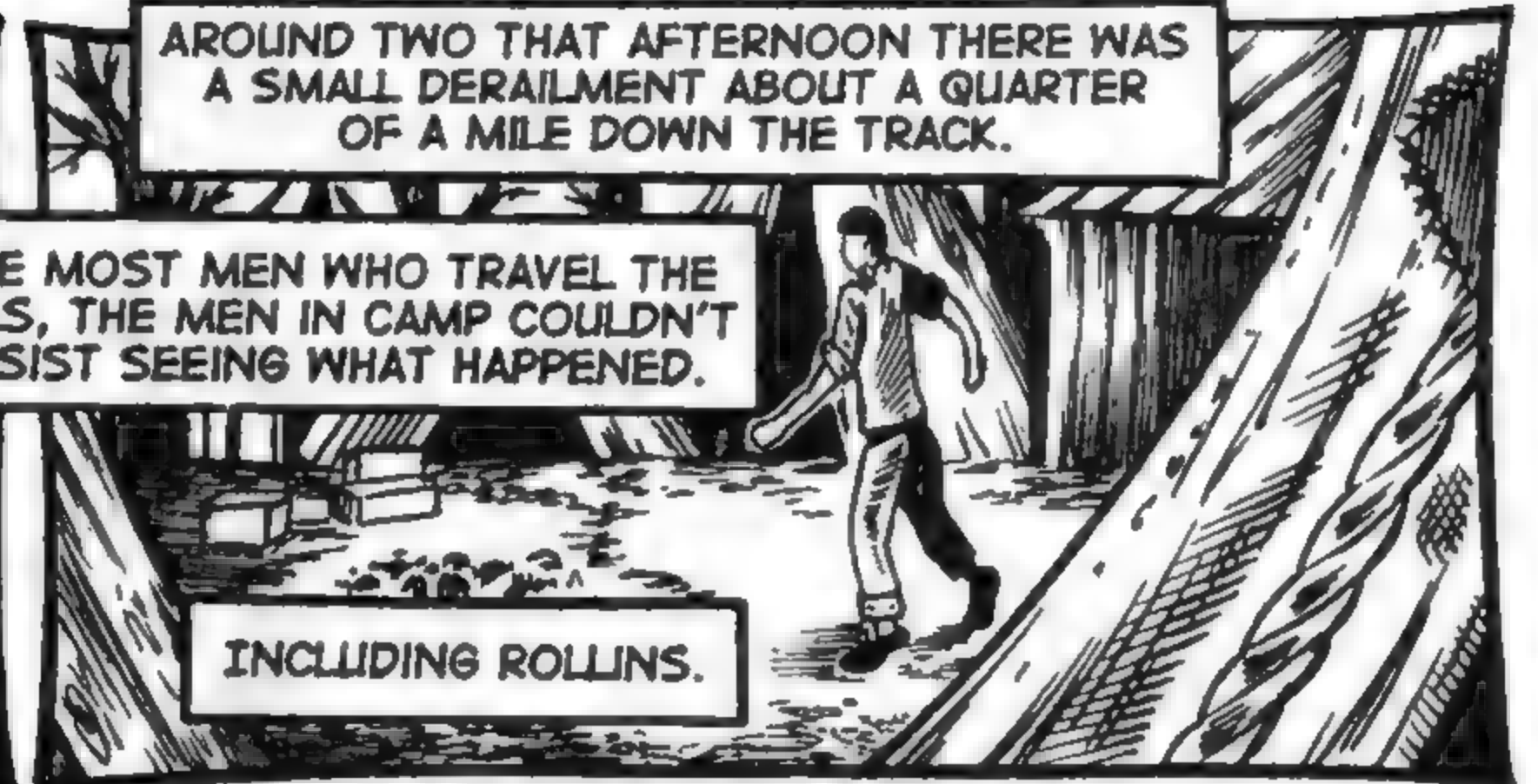


I PITCHED MY HAMMER AND NAILS AND WORKED MY WAY THROUGH THE JUNGLE.

AROUND TWO THAT AFTERNOON THERE WAS A SMALL DERAILMENT ABOUT A QUARTER OF A MILE DOWN THE TRACK.

LIKE MOST MEN WHO TRAVEL THE RAILS, THE MEN IN CAMP COULDN'T RESIST SEEING WHAT HAPPENED.

INCLUDING ROLLINS.



IN THE OLD MAN'S PLACE I FOUND SOME OLD CLOTHES AND A KNAPSACK.



AFTER CHECKING FOR ANY SIGN OF ROLLINS, I OPENED THE KNAPSACK.



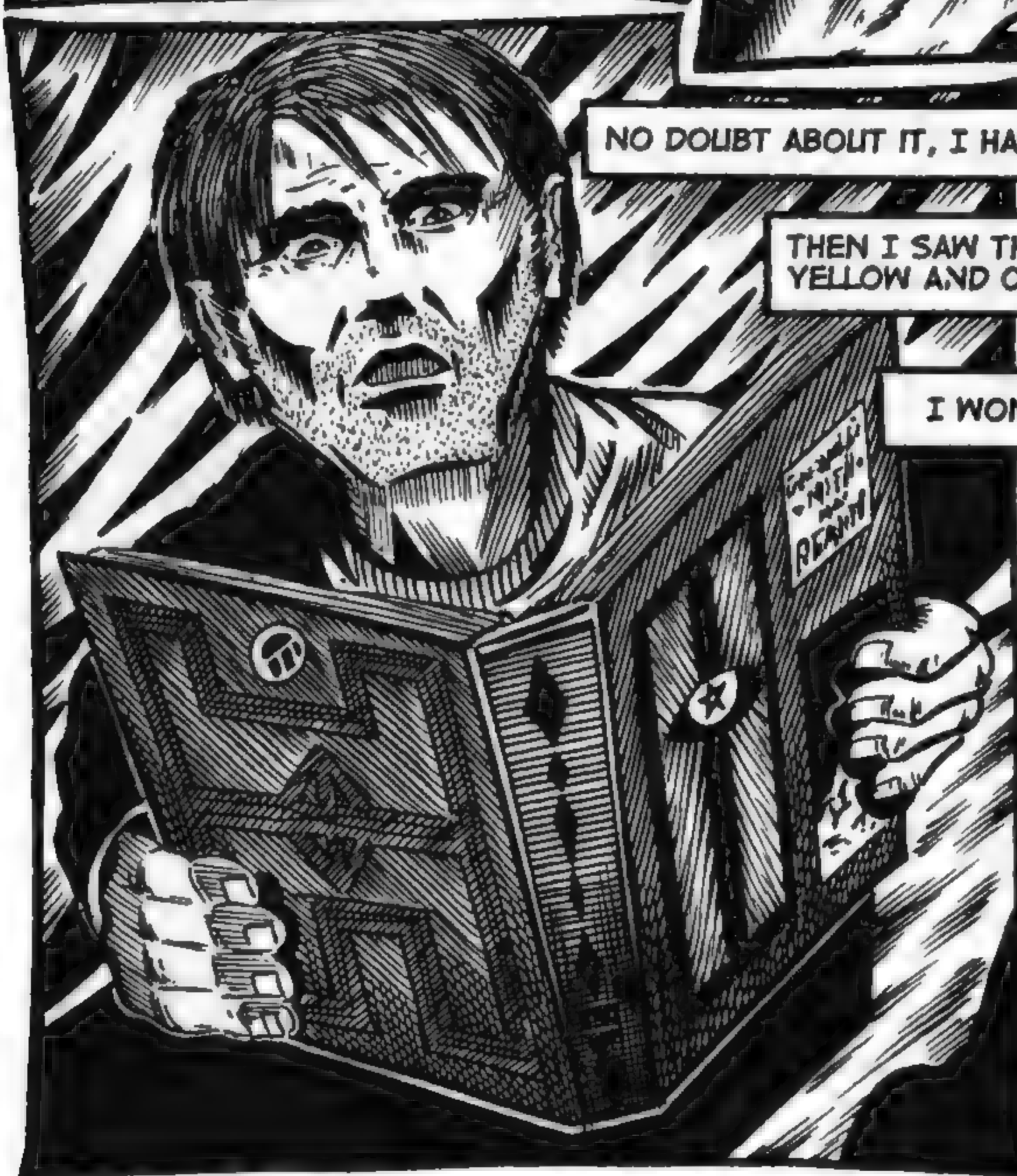
INSIDE I FOUND MOST OF THE THINGS YOU'D EXPECT...AND A HARBACK BOOK.



NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, I HAD FOUND MY MAN.

THEN I SAW THE PICTURE, FADED YELLOW AND CRACKED WITH AGE.

I WONDERED WHO SHE WAS.



A FEW MINUTES LATER, HAMMER IN HAND, NAILS IN MY TEETH, I WAS BACK TO WORK.

AT THE BONFIRE THAT NIGHT I HEARD
ALL ABOUT THE DAY'S EVENTS IN TOWN.



THE SHERIFF HAD HASSLED EVERYBODY
ABOUT THE MUTILATION DEATH OF A
TEENAGE GIRL A FEW WEEKS AGO.

ALL THE TIME THE MEN TALKED
ABOUT THIS, I WATCHED CARLYLE
THERE ON THE EDGE OF THE FIRELIGHT.

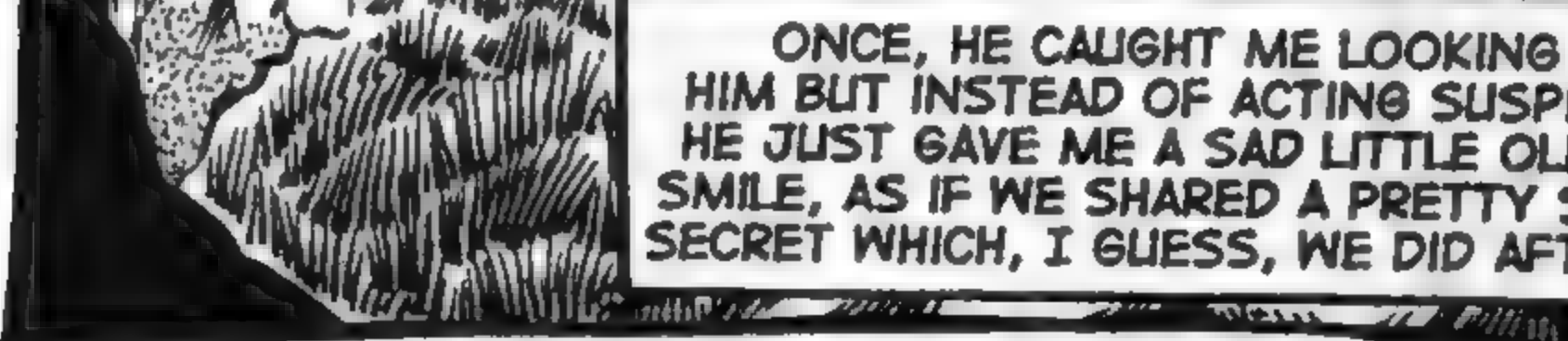


THAT HAD BEEN THE NAME
WRITTEN ON THE FRONT
PAGE OF HIS BOOK:
HORACE CARLYLE.

HE DIDN'T SEEM INTERESTED IN
ANY OF IT, HE JUST SIPPED HIS
COFFEE AND STARED AT THE SKY.



ONCE, HE CAUGHT ME LOOKING AT
HIM BUT INSTEAD OF ACTING SUSPICIOUS
HE JUST GAVE ME A SAD LITTLE OLD MAN
SMILE, AS IF WE SHARED A PRETTY SPECIAL
SECRET WHICH, I GUESS, WE DID AFTER ALL.



THE DAY'S WORK HAD LEFT ME TIRED SO
I PUT MY BACK TO THE TREE AND WENT TO
SLEEP EARLY. THAT WAY I'D BE READY TO
FOLLOW CARLYLE WHEN HE LEFT.



CARLYLE LEFT CAMP JUST AFTER MIDNIGHT.

I WAS ONLY THREE MINUTES BEHIND HIM.



CARLYLE HEADED FOR TOWN, TAKING THE
EDGE OF THE RAILROAD BED FOR HIS TRAIN.

BETWEEN THE BANK AND THE
ONLY HOTEL IS WHERE HE MADE
HIS TRANSFORMATION.

THE TOWN WAS
MOSTLY SHUT DOWN.



HE WENT IN THE ALLEY JUST A
SHAMBLING OLD 'BO, BUT HE CAME
A MINUTE LATER A SLEEK, SILVER
WOLF, THE SAME WOLF THAT HAD
MURDERED MY BROTHER FIVE
YEARS AGO. THE SAME WOLF I
CARRIED THE SILVER BULLET FOR.

HE WALKED DOWN A ROW OF
PARKED CARS UNTIL HE FOUND
ONE WITH AN OPEN WINDOW.

HE JUMPED INSIDE AND JUMPED
ONCE MORE BEHIND THE SEAT.

I HID AND WATCHED AS HE MADE
HIS WAY OUT ONTO THE STREET.

WHAT HE DID NEXT SURPRISED ME.

HE'D PICKED OUT HIS PREY FOR THE EVENING.
ALL HE WAS DOING NOW WAS WAITING.



OVER THE NEXT HALF HOUR, MOST OF THE CARS DISAPPEARED. THEIR OWNERS CAME WOBBLING OUT OF THE TAVERN, GOT INTO THEIR CARS AND DROVE AWAY.



FINALLY WE WERE DOWN TO TWO CARS. I CROUCHED DOWN BEHIND ONE OF THEM. THE WOLF WAITED IN THE OTHER.



I KNEW I'D HAVE TO MOVE FAST BUT I'D ALSO HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL HE GOT INTO HIS CAR TO MAKE MY MOVE.



FINALLY HE WADDLED OUT TO HIS CAR. HE WAS SHORT, FAT, AND DRUNK AS A SKUNK.



HE WAS THE RIGHT MAN, ALL RIGHT. HE OPENED THE DOOR AND MANAGED TO STUFF HIMSELF INTO THE MODEL-T.

NOW WAS THE TIME FOR ME TO MAKE MY MOVE.



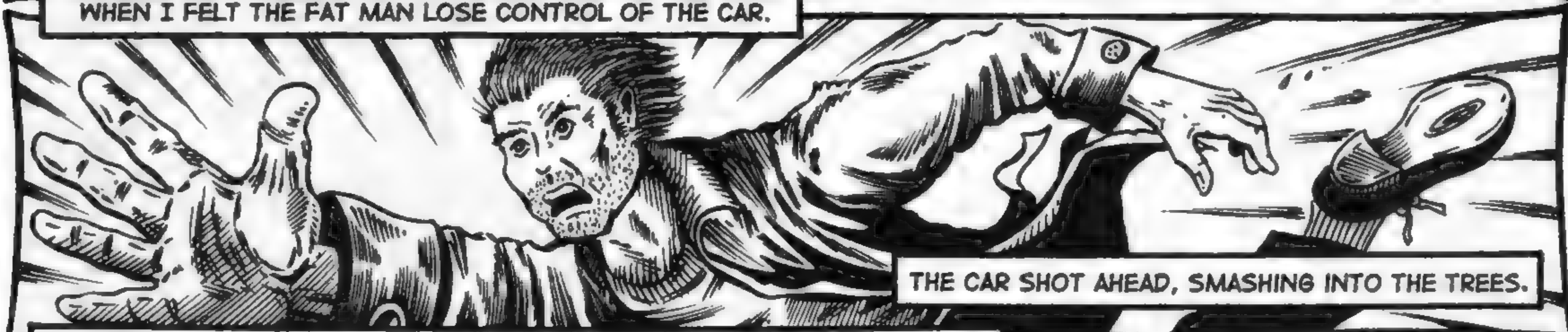
TEN MINUTES LATER, ME CLINGING TO THE SPARE, WE MADE OUR WAY OUT OF TOWN.



THE DIRT ROADS WERE PRETTY BAD. THE FAT MAN GOT UP TO THIRTY MILES-AN-HOUR BY THE TIME WE HIT THE COUNTRY.

THE ENGINE WAS SO LOUD I COULDN'T HEAR ANYTHING FROM INSIDE THE CAR.

WE WERE JUST COMING UP TO A SHARP TURN IN THE ROAD WHEN I FELT THE FAT MAN LOSE CONTROL OF THE CAR.



THE CAR SHOT AHEAD, SMASHING INTO THE TREES.

THERE WAS A CLATTER OF GLASS AND THE DEEP THUNDER OF RIPPING STEEL.



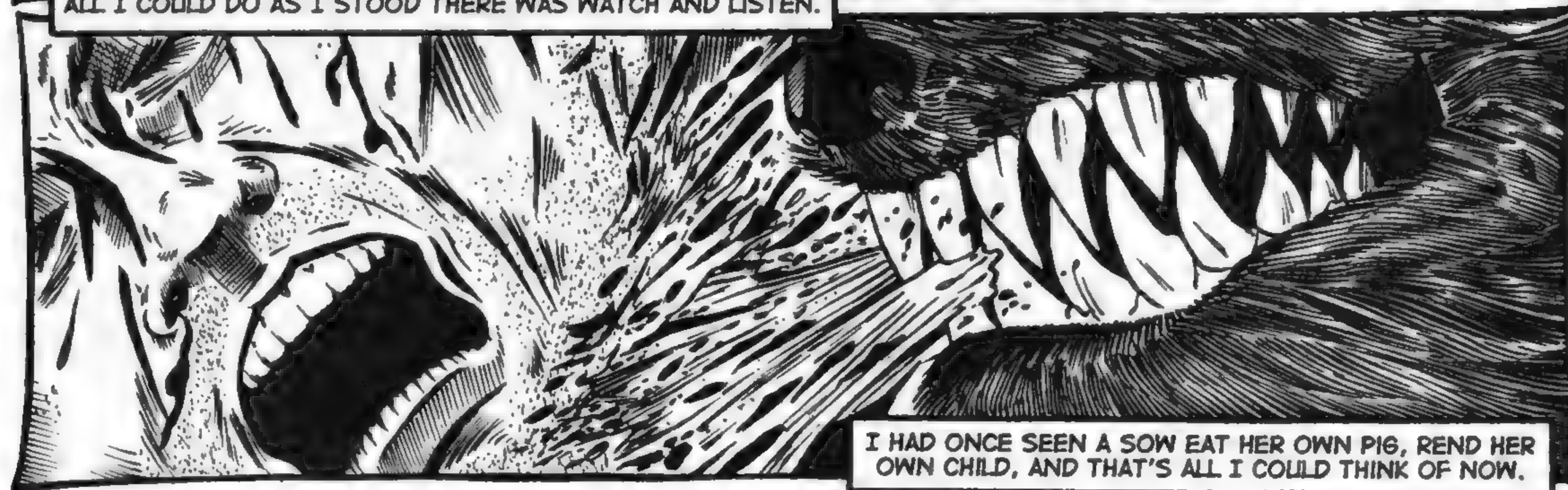
THERE WAS THE ODD SILENCE THAT ALWAYS FOLLOWS AN ACT OF VIOLENCE.




THEN I HEARD THE WOLF GROWL...AND THE FAT MAN SCREAMED.




ALL I COULD DO AS I STOOD THERE WAS WATCH AND LISTEN.



I HAD ONCE SEEN A SOW EAT HER OWN PIG, REND HER OWN CHILD, AND THAT'S ALL I COULD THINK OF NOW.




AND THEN THERE WAS THE SILENCE AGAIN AS THE WOLF, FINISHED, LAY ON THE SEAT NEXT TO THE FAT MAN'S BLOODY REMAINS.




FROM BEHIND MY BACK, I TOOK THE GUN I'D JUST LOADED WITH THE SILVER BULLET, AND I RAISED THE WEAPON AND POINTED IT DIRECTLY AT THE WOLF AND STARTED TO PULL THE TRIGGER...



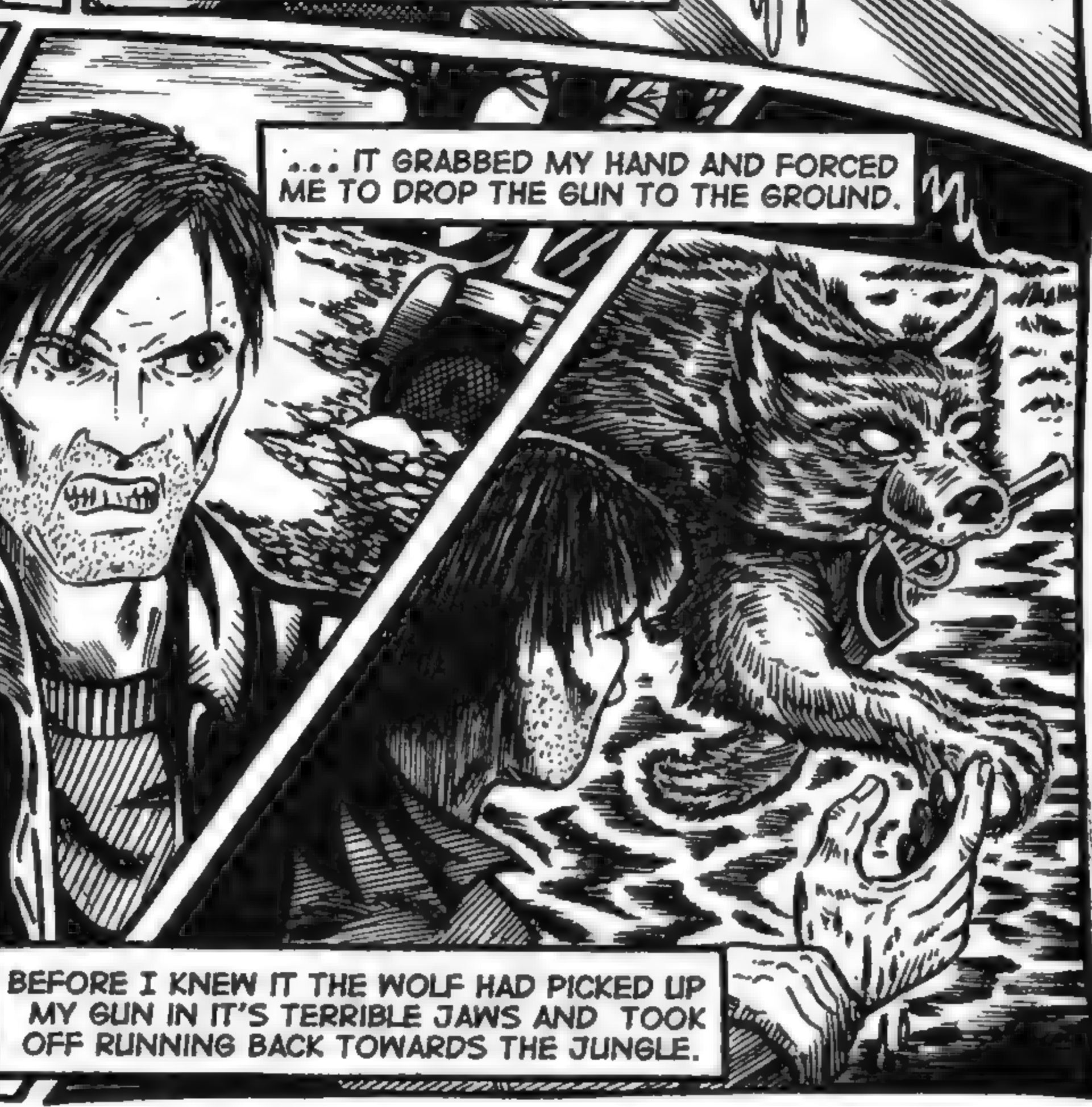
THROUGH THE WINDOW IT CAME, ITS POWERFUL TEETH BARE, IT'S BACKSIDE SHATTERING WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE GLASS.



I JUMPED BACK SO THE WOLF WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO SEIZE MY THROAT BUT THE ANIMAL SURPRISED ME BY HURLING ITSELF AT MY HAND AND THE GUN I HELD...



THIS CLOSE, I COULD SMELL THE HOT SOUR STENCH OF THE FAT MAN'S MEAT AND BLOOD ON THE WOLF'S BREATH.



... IT GRABBED MY HAND AND FORCED ME TO DROP THE GUN TO THE GROUND.

BEFORE I KNEW IT THE WOLF HAD PICKED UP MY GUN IN IT'S TERRIBLE JAWS AND TOOK OFF RUNNING BACK TOWARDS THE JUNGLE.



AFTER A TIME, I WALKED CLOSER TO THE CAR AND PEELED INSIDE. I DIDN'T NEED TO LOOK CLOSELY.

IN A HALF HOUR OR SO...



STILL MOVING AS IF IN A DREAM...



I STARTED BACK TOWARDS THE 'BO JUNGLE.



YOU LIKE SOME COFFEE, MR. DAVIS?

SURE.



YOU'VE BEEN AFTER ME FOR MORE THAN FIVE YEARS NOW.

SURPRISED THAT I KNEW YOU WERE TRAILING ME?



YOU SEEM TO KNOW A LOT.

I ALSO KNOW WHY YOU'RE FOLLOWING ME.



YOU KILLED MY BROTHER.

THREE HOURS LATER, WHEN I REACHED THE CAMP, CARLYLE WAS ALREADY WAITING FOR ME.



THAT PART'S TRUE ENOUGH, MR. DAVIS. I DID KILL YOUR BROTHER. I WORKED FOR HIM, AND ONE NIGHT HE SAW ME TRANSFORM AND KILL A HOBO. FOR THE NEXT YEAR HE BLACKMAILED ME.

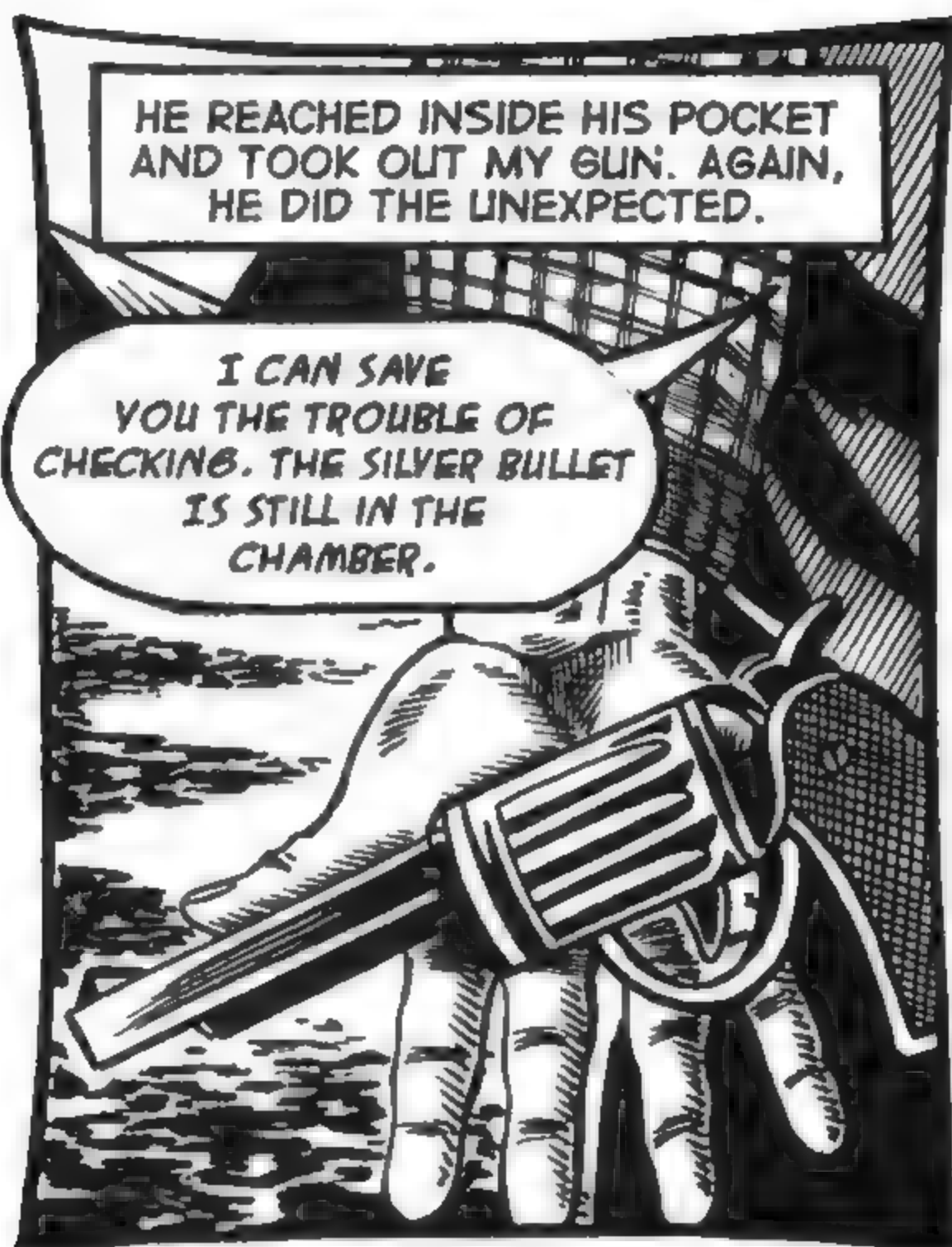
BLACKMAILED YOU? FOR WHAT? MY BROTHER WAS A RICH MAN.

AH, BUT I POSSESSED SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN MONEY TO YOUR BROTHER. I POSSESS THE SECRET OF LYCANTHROPY.

THAT'S WHAT HE WANTED, HE WANTED TO BE JUST LIKE ME.

AND THAT'S WHY YOU'VE BEEN FOLLOWING ME, MR. DAVIS. NOT TO AVENGE YOUR BROTHER BUT BECAUSE YOU WANT THE SAME THING HE DID. MY SECRET.

I SAID NOTHING. THERE WAS NOTHING TO SAY.



HE REACHED INSIDE HIS POCKET AND TOOK OUT MY GUN. AGAIN, HE DID THE UNEXPECTED.

I CAN SAVE YOU THE TROUBLE OF CHECKING. THE SILVER BULLET IS STILL IN THE CHAMBER.



WHY WOULD YOU GIVE IT TO ME?

I HADN'T NOTICED BEFORE NOW BUT HIS EYES HAD GROWN WATERY.

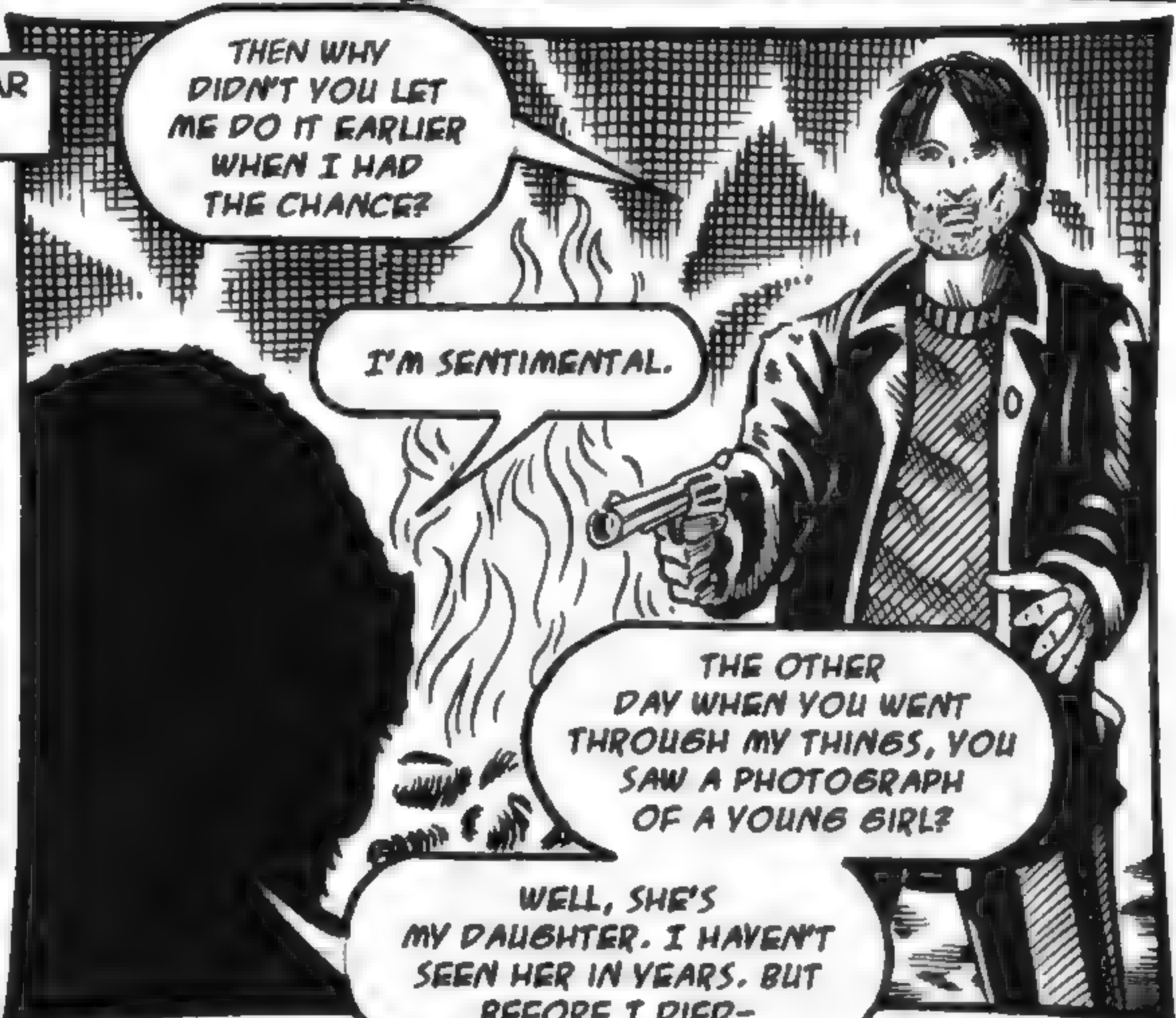


I WANT TO DIE MR. DAVIS.



I THOUGHT BACK TO THE CAR AND THE FAT MAN INSIDE.

AND I WANT YOU TO KILL ME TONIGHT.



THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU LET ME DO IT EARLIER WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE?

I'M SENTIMENTAL.

THE OTHER DAY WHEN YOU WENT THROUGH MY THINGS, YOU SAW A PHOTOGRAPH OF A YOUNG GIRL?

WELL, SHE'S MY DAUGHTER. I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN YEARS. BUT BEFORE I DIED—



I HELD THE GUN IN MY HAND, GRIPPED THE HANDLE, LET MY FINGER LIGHTLY BRUSH THE TRIGGER.

I WANTED TO SEE THE PHOTOGRAPH, HOLD IT IN MY HAND, AND REMEMBER HER.

AND NOW THAT I HAVE, I'M READY MR. DAVIS, ANY TIME YOU ARE.

BUT I'VE GOT TO WARN YOU OF SOMETHING. IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS, THE ABILITY TO TRANSFORM YOURSELF. THE GYPSIES CALL IT A CURSE AND THAT'S JUST WHAT IT IS. ONCE YOU DRINK THE TAINTED BLOOD YOU ARE NO LONGER HUMAN. YOU'RE AN EXILE ON YOUR OWN PLANET. YOU'LL LOOK AT WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND LOVELY SUMMER DAYS AND YOU'LL WANT TO APPRECIATE THEM BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO BECAUSE THE ONLY THING THAT WILL MATTER WILL BE THE TRANSFORMATION AND THE KILLING. YOU'LL PRAY AND YOU'LL CRY THAT YOU CAN BE YOUR OLD SELF AGAIN BUT IT WILL NEVER HAPPEN.

I'D GIVE ANYTHING TO BE A HUMAN BEING AGAIN MR. DAVIS.

ANYTHING.



I'M WILLING
TO TAKE MY CHANCES,
CARLYLE. I HAVEN'T SPENT
FIVE YEARS CHASING YOU
FOR NOTHING.

BUT I WAS TIRED OF TALK AND TIRED
OF DREAMING. I WANTED THE REALITY
OF IT NOW, THE ANIMAL FREEDOM OF IT.



ALL I CAN
DO IS WARN YOU,
MR. DAVIS.

HOW ABOUT
UP BY THE TRACKS?

WHERE YOU'LL
KILL ME, YOU MEAN?

YES.

IT DOESN'T
MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE
TO ME, MR. DAVIS.

THEN LET'S GO.

YOU DIDN'T
LISTEN TO ANYTHING
I'VE JUST TOLD YOU,
DID YOU?

ALL YOU KNOW
IS THAT YOU WANT
THE SECRET FOR
YOURSELF.

I WAS JUST LIKE
YOU. ALL I CARED ABOUT
WAS THE SECRET. AND I SACRIFICED
EVERYTHING FOR IT. BUT THE KILLING
MAKES YOU WEARY, MR. DAVIS. THAT'S
WHAT YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

I DIDN'T WANT
TO KILL THAT MAN TONIGHT
BUT I HAD NO CHOICE.

COME ON, CARLYLE,
YOU'VE GIVEN ME YOUR
LITTLE SPEECH ONCE. I
DON'T WANT TO HEAR
IT AGAIN.

BY THE CREEK, JUST DOWN FROM WHERE THE TRACKS CURVE WESTWARD, CARLYLE STOOD CALMLY WITH HIS HANDS AT HIS SIDES.

YOU WANT A CIGARETTE OR SOMETHING?

I'M TRYING TO BE NICE.

SORT OF LIKE IN THE MOVIES, EH, MR. DAVIS?

BUT YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE. YOU THINK I'M AFRAID TO DIE. BUT I'M EAGER FOR IT.

REALLY?

REALLY, MR. DAVIS.



SO I KILLED HIM.

ONE SHOT STRAIGHT IN THE HEART.

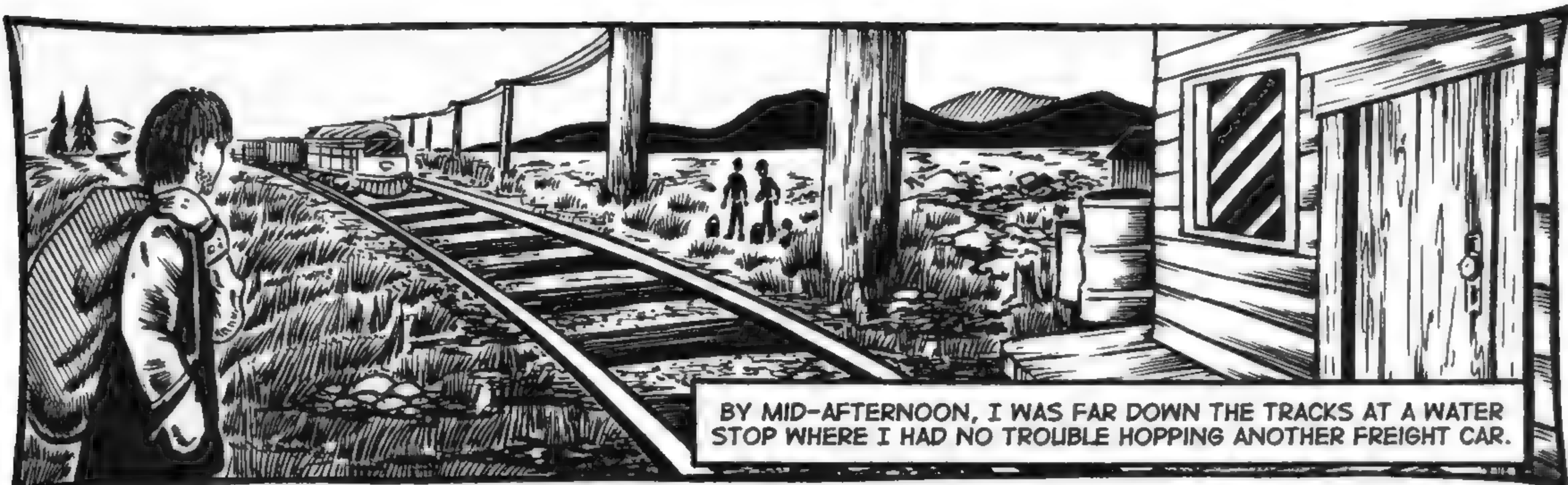


I MOVED QUICKLY, THEN, PUTTING MY MOUTH TO HIS CHEST AND DRINKING THE CURSED BLOOD HOT AND TART IN MY MOUTH.



I VOMITED, THEN, BUT I WASN'T WORRIED. I'D TAKEN PLENTY OF HIS BLOOD INTO MY SYSTEM.





BY MID-AFTERNOON, I WAS FAR DOWN THE TRACKS AT A WATER STOP WHERE I HAD NO TROUBLE HOPPING ANOTHER FREIGHT CAR.



THERE WERE A COUPLE OF 'BOS ALREADY IN THE CAR, SHARING GIGGLES AND LOOKS OF CONTEMPT FOR ME.

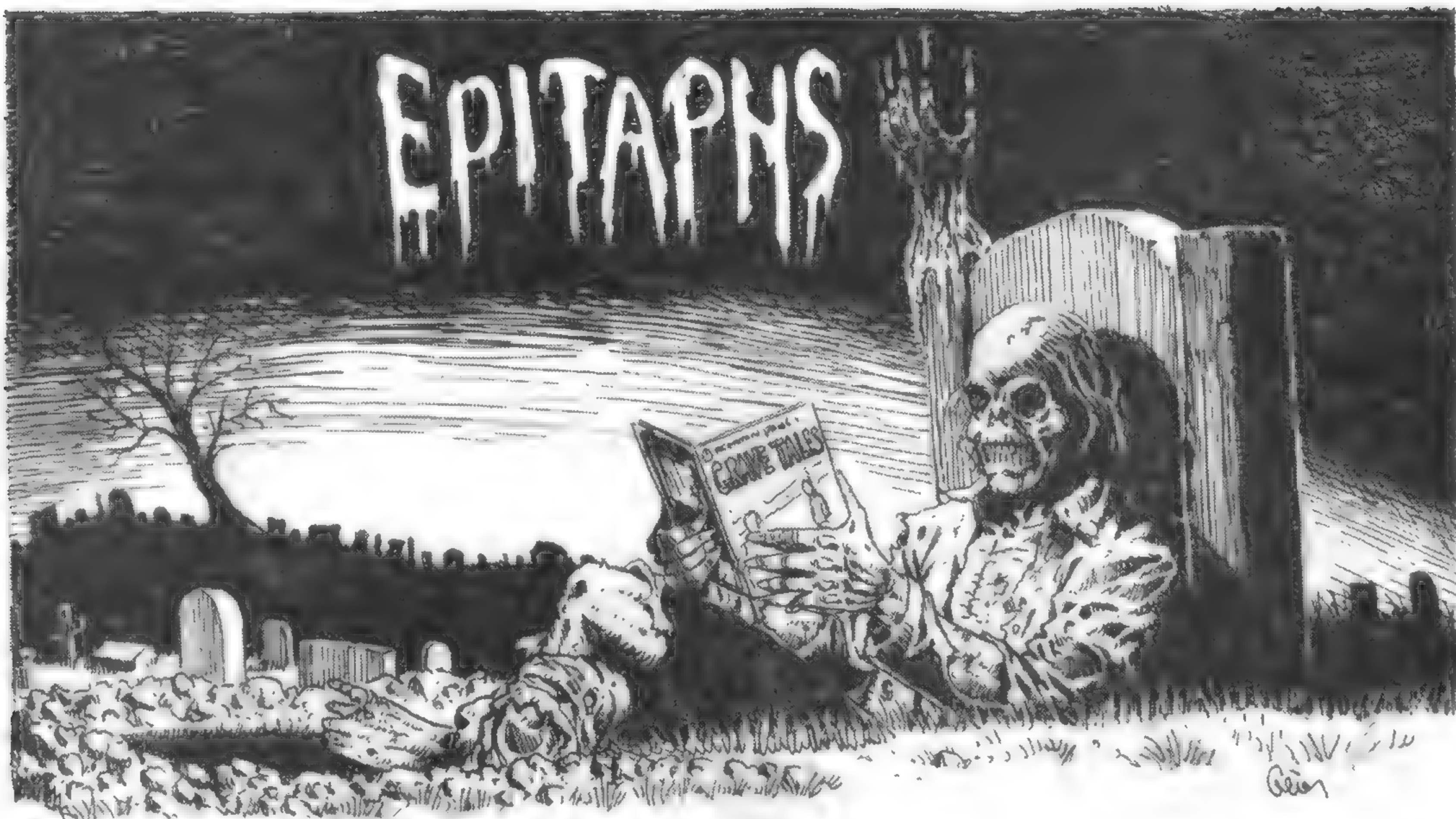


I JUST SAT IN THE CORNER AND STARED AT THEM AS THE TRAIN JERKED AWAY FROM THE WATER TOWER.



LATER THAT NIGHT ONE OF THEM WAS GOING TO BE MY FIRST MEAL.

THE END



TUB

BY RAY GARTON

The huge whirlpool tub in the redwood room filled with lush plants was what made them decide to rent the house. Well, that and the price, which was unbeatable. As water ran into the big tub, Felicia lit scented candles and poured wine into two glasses while Albert put some music on the stereo – Oscar Peterson, Albert's favorite. They'd been so busy moving in that they hadn't had time to use the tub yet, or break in the house with a nice screw. Tonight they intended to do both.

She went to the switch on the wall and dimmed the lights, then took her clothes off and got into the tub. Albert was right behind her.

"It's a little hot," he said.

"Why are men so sensitive to hot water?"

"I don't know that all men are."

"Well, my friends at the gym all agree. Men can't take hot water."

"Probably because we spend so much time in it with our women."

"Smartass. Turn on the jets and let's get this party started."

The water began to roil around them as the jets started. Felicia turned

around in the tub and leaned back against Albert. He put his arms around her, one hand on a breast, the other on her flat belly. Felicia reached out for her glass of wine, took a sip, then another.

"I wonder why the previous occupants cut out the way they did," Albert said. "Why would they walk away from a place like this so suddenly?"

"I'm not so sure that they walked away."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, I talked to our neighbor today, the woman on that side." She gestured backward over her shoulder with her thumb. "A widow named Estelle Becker. She's lived here for more than twenty years. She says it's happened before."

"What has?"

"People living in this house and then –" She shrugged one shoulder. "– *not* living in this house."

"Mrs. Winetski didn't mention anything about that." Mrs. Winetski was the property management agent who showed them the house.

"I know. But Estelle says it's happened before, and it kind of creeps out the neighbors. People move in, then one day

not long after they move in, they're gone and they've left their stuff behind."

"Their stuff?"

"Yeah. They don't even –" Felicia yelped and jumped, then laughed. "Stop that!"

"Stop what?"

"Grabbing my ass like that. I almost –" Felicia stopped when she looked down and saw that Albert's hands hadn't moved. One was still on her breast, the other had moved to her thigh. She frowned. "Did you move your leg?"

"No." Albert sounded preoccupied. "What did Estelle say became of these people?"

"She didn't. They just disappeared."

"Well, what did the police say?"

"She said the police never came to the house."

"That doesn't sound right. Did this woman strike you as crazy?"

"Not at all. She said they didn't even –" Felicia moved so fast, she sloshed water out of the tub. She went to the other end of the big oval and turned around, facing Albert. "That hurt!"

He looked confused. "*What* hurt?"

Before she could respond, she noticed they were nearly shouting. The tub's jets had increased so much, the water was bubbling loudly. And something else – the jets were ... different.

Frowning, she moved her hand in front of one of them, then jerked it back and gasped. The jet had not only become more powerful, it had narrowed to a needle-like concentration that caused her pain when her hand passed through it. All of the jets had had done the same.

"What the hell is wrong with this tub?" Albert said as his back stiffened. He tried to stand but slipped and dropped back on his ass again.

The jets began to hurt as they hit Felicia's skin like hot needles and she scrambled to get to her feet. She had as much luck as Albert. She grabbed the edge of the tub with both hands and pulled as the pain got worse and then –

Swirling pink clouds in the water quickly grew darker until a deadly crimson began to fill the tub.

Felicia's arms flailed and splashed in the bloody water. "Help me, Albert! *Help me!*"

Albert's eyes grew enormous with fear as he fought to get up.

Felicia got on her knees and leaned on the edge of the tub to lift herself up, clenching her teeth and trying not to lose it, trying not to fly into a mindless, screaming panic, but –

The floor of the tub moved.

She released a shrill scream as the floor beneath her fell away and the water began to drain rapidly, pulling her.

Felicia heard Albert make a horrible sound of terror that was abruptly cut short.

Her hold on the edge of the tub slipped away and she threw herself in Albert's direction, hoping he could hold onto her, but –


Albert was gone.

Felicia's head dropped beneath the water and her hands clawed uselessly at the slippery wall of the tub. She swallowed water, tasted blood, then *really* panicked, and inhaled water into her lungs.

Blackness swallowed her. It felt like being swallowed by blackness, anyway. Definitely swallowed.



The silence in the room was pronounced after the thrum of the tub's pump. The plants hanging from the ceiling and growing on planters mounted on the redwood walls remained indifferent.

The tub was empty. 

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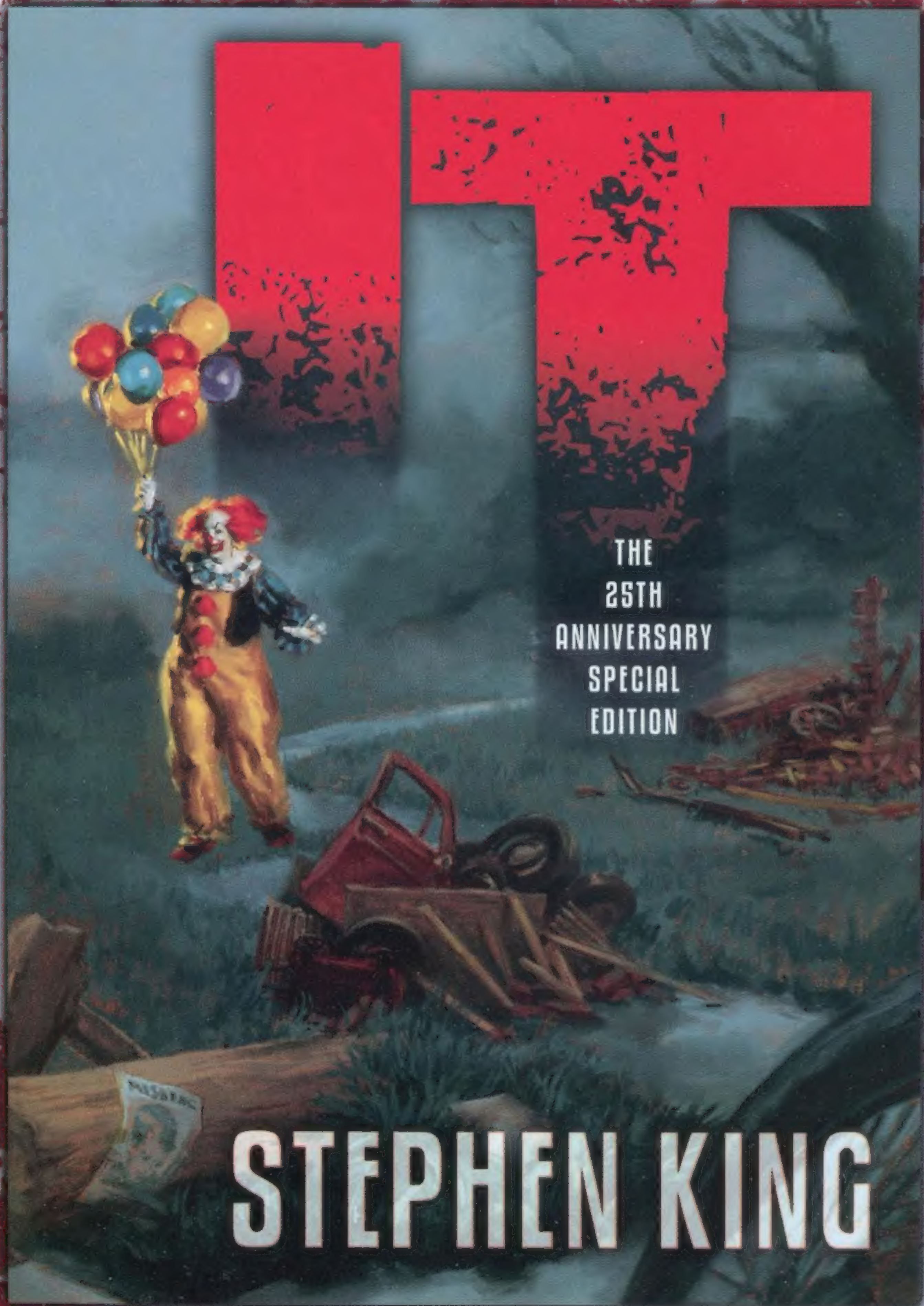
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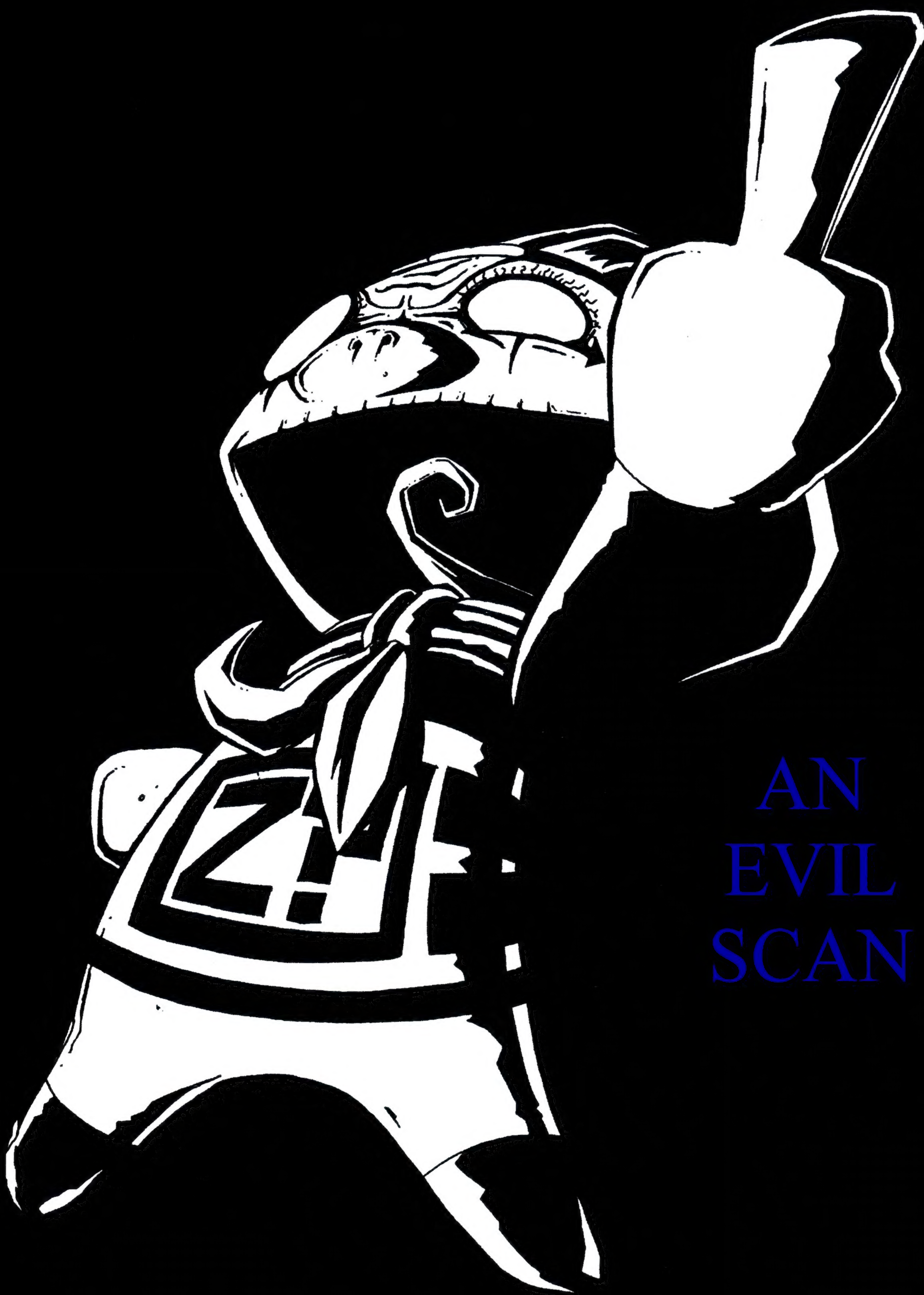
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